

THE PRINCETON SEMINARY BULLETIN

Peace to You

Ulrich W. Mauser

Opening Convocation, September 23, 1984

The Prayer

Katharine Doob Sakenfeld

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The Open Banquet

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Can the West be Converted?

Lesslie Newbigin

VOLUME VI, NUMBER 1

NEW SERIES 1985

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The Princeton Seminary Bulletin

VOL. VI

NEW SERIES 1985

NUMBER 1

Ronald C. White, Jr., Editor

Lynn S. Halverson, Assistant to the Editor

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Ronald C. White, Jr.

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Lynn S. Halverson

Assistant to the Editor

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Peace to You

by ULRICH W. MAUSER

Ulrich W. Mauser is Errett M. Grabel Professor of New Testament and Dean of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. An alumnus of the University of Tübingen and the University of St. Andrews, he is a member of the American Academy of Religion and the Society of Biblical Literature. Dr. Mauser is the author of three books and is editor of Horizons in Biblical Theology.

Opening Convocation, September 23, 1984

SEVERAL years ago, the General Assembly of what was then the United Presbyterian Church in the USA, voted to embark on a ten year emphasis on peacemaking. A committee was duly formed which has ever since this vote vigorously directed and coordinated the peacemaking efforts, and it was this committee which in the spring of 1983 approached your sister institution, the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, with the request to consider conducting a pilot project in theological education by implanting the concern for peace into the body of an already existing theological curriculum in the hope that as many members of Pittsburgh's faculty as possible would probe the issue of peace each in their disciplines and in the expectation that our efforts would benefit the church, in both theory and practice. After the invitation had been extended to it by the peacemaking committee, the Pittsburgh faculty, as all good faculties do, hesitated, deliberated, cogitated, and finally eventuated the acceptance: and so we had one pilot year of peace studies and peacemaking and I am glad we did it. I have not received the honor of being with you tonight in order to spread before you the administrative intricacies, or the

curricular mechanics, or the actual effects even of this pilot year. But I will say that all of us Pittsburghers, students and faculty, who allowed ourselves to pay a price for the pilot through many long hours of involvement and study—that we have learned from it. And this is the one simple thing that I would like to offer to you tonight: to give you a few glimpses of what I have learned in my own theological discipline, which is New Testament studies, in the course of the past eighteen months, a few glimpses of observations and growing convictions which a year ago I would have been unable to give. Here it is in a nutshell, as a single thesis: Jesus' beatitudes at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount are the manifesto of the sovereignty of God. Each single beatitude describes all of God's sovereignty from a specific point of view. Therefore, the sentence "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God," captures all of God's kingship seen from one specific vantage point. And that means: All of Jesus' work and word, his whole will and accomplishment, the total gospel without remainder, and hence God's reconciliation and salvation of the world, can be called peacemaking.

Here are some small New Testament vignettes to illustrate the point.

I

In the Gospel of Mark, in chapter 5, we have the story of a woman who had been sick for twelve long years, who had spent all her hope, patience, and money on an assortment of medical specialists, and who had finally crashed through a crowd to touch the wonder-man from Galilee. She is healed by the touch and she knows it, and then at the conclusion of the story she is sent away as the healer says to her: "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease" (5:34). "Go in peace" means here quite simply: "go with your health restored," exactly as the word *shalom* is used quite often in the Old Testament in the sense of health and well-being. So, the healing of the woman is an act of peacemaking.

And now I ask you: are not the Gospels filled with longer narratives and many small summarizing remarks about Jesus' healing of the sick? Do accounts of these cures not occupy the greatest amount of interest on the part of the evangelists whenever they tell of their Lord's action? Does it not sound on occasion as though with the arrival of this incomparable healer on the scene, all Galilee had turned suddenly into a big hospital in which the sick of all descriptions crowded around the one who could liberate them from all physical and mental ailment and infirmity? This is the image which had engraved itself into the memory and into the faith of Jesus' followers: from his body flowed living streams of healing and in the flowing of that

stream was restored the peace of God for his creatures which is the freedom from debilitating weakness of body and mind.

Of course we do not normally call that peacemaking. But perhaps it would be wise if our thought and language about peace remained a lot more closely guided by whole vistas of biblical perception in which the absence of armed conflict and its consequences are viewed as twins of the absence of severe physical limitations and its results. Care for the preservation of friendly relations between nations may be credible only if accompanied by the daily and constant care for those who cannot enjoy the full use of a sound mind and a healthy body. And it may be said for all those who today seek to love and to labor in the name of Christ that from the chaplain in a hospital equipped with incredibly sophisticated medical tools down to the members of a family who gather around the sickbed of one of their own to raise their supplication, you are all caught up in the stream of healing which flows from the sovereignty of God into a world twisted in pain. Be glad of it and be proud of it for through your patient labor issues the blessing: "Peace be to you."

II

I turn to a second aspect of peacemaking. In the epistle of James you will find this remark: "If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food, and one of you says to them 'go in peace, be warmed and filled' without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit?" (2:15f.). Or, to put it a little differently: if on a cold Penn-

sylvania night some unemployed people linger around your church, creatures whose misery crept into their very flesh and skin, making it grey and dirty and ruffled in wrinkles, and you turn them away from the warmth of your church because some of your members consider it unseemly for the house of God to be soiled by ungainly petitioners, then you have not only acted like a hypocrite but you have broken God's peace and declared war on some of his loved ones. For, in this case, to be in peace is nothing other than to be warmed and filled.

From here I want to draw your mind back to the story of Jesus Christ in the Gospels. There is one narrative which, if you count all four Gospels as one, is told no less than seven times, a story about Jesus' action more frequently repeated than any other: it is the story of the feeding of a great crowd of hungry people in the desert where there was no food. Somehow, there is no doubt about it, the evangelists were absorbed in their interest for empty stomachs in an empty wilderness. And although all these feeding stories are replete with all kinds of subtle overtones, the basic thing remains quite manifest: the peace of God for his people is in jeopardy if empty stomachs dictate panic and shivering skin conjures up the hollow-cheeked monster of terror.

I want to tell you of an incident that happened when our family was living in Louisville some ten years ago. One day our youngest son was returning from school showing signs of being seriously upset. We asked him what had happened and he told us of two human skeletons which

were on display in the biology lab of the school and of his biology teacher who had informed the class that the one skeleton had been purchased some twenty-five years ago at a cost of \$825, while the other one had been bought quite recently for a mere \$140. Our son's question was: "why have human skeletons become so cheap of late?" I did not trust the accuracy of my child's recollection, and phoned the teacher the next day to verify the information. It was correct. A few days later, we received from the teacher a package containing two catalogues, an old and a new one, from a firm in Chicago which prepares human skeletons for use in schools. Attached to it was a handwritten note from the teacher which read: "This company has scouts some of whom live in India. These scouts buy the bodies of those hundreds of Indians who die of starvation. The families of the deceased are so poor they cannot afford to bury them. The bodies are sent to Chicago where the flesh is removed, and the skeleton exposed. The bones are then wired together as a perfect reproduction of the human skeleton." That happened in 1974 in the teeth of a galloping inflation and one could not but wonder why finally at least human skeletons had plummeted in price. Everything else was skyrocketing, but the cost of human bones had dramatically decreased.

Without attaching blame to anyone or anything, it must be said quite objectively that this kind of thing is, in biblical terms, an outrage against the peace of God, a declaration and waging of war against God's creation. To be engaged in preparation for the ministry means to discipline

mind and soul to get ready to join the company of those who in the footsteps of their Lord dare to feed the hungry in the desert to announce and enact again the great philanthropy of our God: "Peace be to you."

III

The third vignette is once more a passage involving a woman. She has, obviously uninvited, made her way into a dinner party given in honor of Jesus by a member of the local society for applied faith—called Pharisees in the New Testament—where she, who has apparently a shady past, begins to cry and wash Jesus' feet with her tears. Some interesting conversation ensues which I will now omit. The narrative closes with Jesus' parting words to the woman: "Your faith has saved you; go in peace" (Luke 7:50).

Striking is the similarity of the closing words in this incident and in the one involving the woman suffering from hemorrhage. Both women are encouraged in identical words: go in peace. And yet this time the word peace must aim at something quite different. It is forgiveness of sins, the restoration of innocence in the relation to God, which is now termed peace. To gauge what this peace entails, we would obviously have to have some notion what the divine forgiveness of sins is. Do we? I submit to you that in the New Testament's light we have only a very inadequate notion of the truth.

In one of his parables Jesus compares the debt of no lesser a person than the apostle Peter to a debt of ten thousand talents which a servant owes to his master. Now we know through the Jewish historian, a man

alive at New Testament times, that Herod the Great had a total tax revenue of about nine hundred talents from all his holdings and possessions. Herod was famed because of his legendary wealth, and yet his annual income was not even a tenth of the debt which the servant, i.e., a man like Peter, had accumulated before God. Of course, this is a parable whose details, and especially whose figures, must not be pressed. But the point is clear: measured by what a child of God could and ought to be we are sunk into such abysmal depths that confinement for life to a dungeon is the only appropriate comparison, as the parable itself tells, unless that incomprehensible marvel of God's liberality and largesse occurs which wipes out the entire indebtedness at once. And this peace is, once again, the very heart of Jesus' life and labor.

The parable introduces, beside the wicked servant, another servant figure who owes the first servant one hundred denarii. One hundred denarii are the equivalent of four months wages paid to an unskilled day laborer in Palestine. And that is the comparison between the depth of alienation from God and the alienation from each other: the one surpasses Herod's wealth more than ten times, the other can be made good even by the poorest in a few months. The more Christian people become aware of this depth of forgiveness, the more certain and the more unambiguous it will become also that they will not only be peacemakers by advocating nuclear freezes, disarmament plans, and the like—although they may very well do that as well—but in the first place

by being members of a community in which the root cause of war and violence is constantly being removed; for all wars are engendered and supported by convictions of superiority, of injured self-esteem, and by the demonization of the enemy. The peace which is the restoration of innocence before God is the effective removal of the possibility to degrade the other, individually or collectively, into the status of inferiority, and it is thus the beginning of a surgery without which political efforts at maintaining international peace may well forever remain fruitless. But to those who plumb the depth of this forgiveness, or rather who are measured by it and much reduced in size, is given the power to be ambassadors of the reign of God beckoning all the world: "Peace be to you."

I have given you three little stones of a multicolored mosaic which is peace in the New Testament. Ten more could easily be added like the vision of peace in the global village in Ephesians 2, the peace through participation in the cross of Christ in Romans 5, or the peace which comes about through the total re-

versal of all that the Jewish liberation movement of the zealots stood for in all of the gospel of Matthew. But my time has come to an end, and I have barely touched on peace as the opposite of war which is so much, and rightly so, on our minds these days. I have done so not because the New Testament has nothing to say about peace between nations and about the overcoming of war, rather I did so because I wanted to give you a truthful account of what, in the course of our pilot year on peace studies and peacemaking in Pittsburgh, I have learned in my own field. And that is this: the breadth and richness of the New Testament's proclamation of peace is so necessary for the attainment of peace in the narrower sense of the word that I want to ask you as I asked our ethicists, theologians, historians, educators, and psychologists to become seriously and practically conversant with the peace issue as one view of the whole gospel. Thus prepared can we then venture out in honesty to stand for the good news of God summarized in the blessing: "Peace to you."

The Prayer

by KATHARINE DOOB SAKENFELD

A native of Ithaca, New York, Katharine Doob Sakenfeld is a graduate of the College of Wooster, Harvard Divinity School, and Harvard University. In addition to her position as associate professor of Old Testament, Dr. Sakenfeld serves as director of the Ph.D. studies program at Princeton. The author of two books, she has served as a representative to the Consultation on Church Union and to the Commission on Faith and Order.

Opening Convocation, September 23, 1984

LET us pray for God's blessing and guidance as we enter upon this academic year:

Almighty God, Ruler of all time and of eternity, grant us your grace as we stand with so many mingled hopes and fears facing this new year. Our help is in your name alone; strengthen us in body, mind, and spirit, that we may do your will ever more faithfully. Whatever the year holds for each one of us, prepare us by humility, reverence, courage, and perseverance, so that in every circumstance we may discover the abundant life of your kingdom.

Let us pray for this institution, that it may fulfill its mission:

Bestower of every good gift, we pray your rich blessing upon Princeton Theological Seminary and upon all whose labors help to make its life creative and more faithful to your calling. Teach us anew that we are one body in which the eye has need of the foot, even as the hand has need of the ear. Knit us together—custodians and students, secretaries, kitchen staff, and administrators, spouses and children, trustees and friends, faculty and field supervisors.

Unite us all in vision and service, that this seminary may bear strong and clear witness to our one Lord and head, even Jesus Christ, savior of the world.

Let us pray for the unity and purity of the church:

Remind us, O God, that your church is yours, not ours, that it is called to your mission, not our programs, that it is broader and deeper than the local congregation we happen to know personally. Give to its many families a vision of the whole. Test and refine every quest for understanding and every action for peace and justice carried forward in your name. Grant your power and peace to all the faithful, that in all of life they may honor you.

Let us pray for those in distress of physical illness or spiritual turmoil:

Sustainer of all, we ask your mercy for all who struggle against odds; for all who find themselves in the night of sorrow or the dense darkness of pain; for those in extremity of weariness, or loneliness, or hopelessness. Grant them each one to hear your

true word of comfort and to experience the gentle care of your everlasting arms.

Let us pray for the world, that all creation may know true peace and true justice.

Compassionate and passionate Redeemer, hear our plea on behalf of this shattered, war-torn, hungry, tortured, and terrified world. Order

unruly powers, deal with injustice, feed and satisfy the longing peoples of every land, so that in peace and freedom your children may enjoy the earth which you have made. Infuse us now with your passion and compassion, that we may from this day forward be conduits of your peace.

Even so, come Lord Jesus, in whose name we pray. Amen.

The Open Banquet

by DANIEL L. MIGLIORE

Daniel L. Migliore is Arthur M. Adams Professor of Systematic Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary. An ordained Presbyterian minister, Dr. Migliore is an alumnus of Westminster College, Princeton Seminary, and Princeton University. He is a member of the editorial council of *Theology Today* and is the author of two books, including *The Power of God* (Westminster, 1983).

Opening Communion Service, September 24, 1984

Text: *He said to him, "A man once gave a great banquet, and invited many; and at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, 'Come, for all is now ready.' But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it; I pray you, have me excused.' And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them; I pray you, have me excused.' And another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' So the servant came and reported this to his master. Then the householder in anger said to his servant, 'Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and maimed and blind and lame.' And the servant said, 'Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.' And the master said to the servant, 'Go out to the highways and hedges, and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled. For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.'"* (Luke 14:12-24)

THE parables of Jesus place everyday events and activities in a new and strange light. In the parables the everyday affairs of life become luminous of the presence, the grace, and the judgment of God.

Working in the fields, playing in the streets, searching for lost possessions, experiencing separation and reunion, evading or perhaps helping people in need—this is the stuff of Jesus' parables. Baking, buying, planting, praying, selling, sleeping, hating, loving—they are all there. And so are eating and drinking.

Like other routines of daily life, eating and drinking hardly seem

crammed with religious significance. But in fact eating and drinking expose our human condition and, at the very least, remind us of our precarious hold on life. We are needy and vulnerable creatures, and the daily necessity of eating and drinking makes that disturbingly plain.

But eating and drinking are far more than events by which our physical needs are provisionally satisfied. They are distinctively human events; they are events of friendship and estrangement, of grace and ingratitude, of fear and joy. In our eating and drinking together our history is inscribed; we give expression to our

memories and our hopes of human fulfillment. Eating and drinking are not mere routines but profound rituals which, for those with eyes to see, light up the human predicament and the divine promise. We recall that, according to Scripture, sin first appears in an act of self-assertive eating; the drama of redemption has a shared meal at its center; and a favorite biblical image of the fulfillment of life as intended by God is a great banquet.

There is, in other words, a hidden theological dimension in all our eating and drinking. In our meals together we signal what humanity we are becoming and what God we worship. Our manner of eating and drinking together defines who we are. The deepest meaning of a meal, of eating and drinking together, is this: we gladly acknowledge that life is a gift; we sit down in peace with others; we share the basics of life with them and thus affirm our common dignity and destiny. When we eat and drink together, we confess that the law of the jungle, the law of individual or group survival, will not rule our existence. We confess that we want to live in community; we recognize our need for others and their need for us. By this elementary gesture of letting others eat and drink in our presence, we accept them as our companions. Eating and drinking together, as intended by God, are acts of human solidarity and friendship.

As sinners, our meals are typically sorry affairs. Instead of being occasions of communication they are reduced to acts of consumption. They are perfunctory rather than festive. They are, above all, exclusive rather

than inclusive. We elect to eat and drink only with our own kind, only with people like us. Birds of a feather not only flock but eat together. We refuse to eat and drink with strangers and foreigners, let alone with obvious undesirables and outright enemies. So we build a wall around our tables. We deny food and friendship and therefore life itself to others. By excluding these unwanted people from our tables we make our eating and drinking an instrument of separation and even of death.

The gospel of Jesus Christ overturns our forgetful and fallen ways of eating and drinking. In contrast to our self-centered, fearful, and even murderous ways of eating and drinking, Jesus ate and drank with the hungry and thirsty masses. He had table-fellowship with sinners and tax-collectors as well as with those considered decent and upright. According to the gospel narrative, he ran into opposition on account of his refusal to abide by the laws governing the eating and drinking of good religious people. Because the meals of Jesus were open in God's name to the outcast and the despised, eating and drinking with Jesus was a liberating event. It was an event of friendship, an event of forgiveness, an event of shared life, an event of God's coming kingdom.

In Jesus' parable of the great banquet his own singular and scandalous habits of eating and drinking are enshrined. So understood, this parable discloses the sinful distortion of and redemptive promise for all of our eating and drinking. The story is disarmingly simple. A man plans a festive meal and invites many to attend. They are too busy, however,

and offer various excuses for declining the invitation. So the householder commands his servant to invite the poor and maimed and blind and lame. And when this is done there is still room for others, so the householder instructs the servant to go into the highways and hedges outside the city and urge all that he meets—strangers and outcast—to come to the banquet.

Like every good story this parable draws us gently into its plot. We find ourselves wondering with which of the characters we wish to join company. Consider first the host. Our sophisticated hermeneutics of suspicion prompt us to ask about the hidden motive of his plan. Was he a show-off? Did he want to outdo all his neighbors in throwing the biggest party of the year? Or did he act simply out of good will? In the latter case, we might feel comfortable if we could see in his act a reflection of our own supposed liberality, but there is a quality of sheer generosity in this figure that is frankly mysterious and unsettling. The mystery deepens when refusals are received, for the host immediately invites the poor and strangers to his table. We are told that he was angry, and who could not understand that reaction? But was his anger equivalent to childish pique? Was the host filled with resentment? Did he want revenge? Did he simply want to save face? Or was his anger just indignation in the face of warped loyalties? And was it the case that through his own pain of rejection the heart of the host was broken open to those who had experienced the anguish of rejection for as long as they could remember? These are questions we

would like to ask, but they return to us unanswered, leaving us with the troubled feeling that we cannot so easily identify ourselves with this host as we originally thought.

And then there are the first-invited who tender their excuses. Just as we are prone too quickly to identify ourselves with the householder, we are probably too quick in making harsh judgments on those people who say they are too busy to attend the banquet. These are, after all, people with high values, and their excuses are far from frivolous—I have bought a field, I have purchased five yoke of oxen, I have married a wife. Surely the values represented by those who excused themselves—property, possessions, family—are high on our own list of values to live by. One might even win an election to high public office by campaigning in support of such values. But in Jesus' parable these values are surprisingly represented as potentially sinister, even idolatrous, when they are allowed to crowd out our response to the offer of unexpected grace and enlarged community. Look closely: those who are invited but decline have no hunger that they cannot themselves satisfy. They are indeed most energetically and successfully satisfying their own needs. They have no use for an unexpected gift; they are taking care of themselves quite well, thank you. They do not need this disruptive invitation to new friendship and new joy. They are making it on their own and are content with the shape they are giving to their lives, whatever the misfortune of others might be. No, we should not too quickly convince ourselves that we have little in common with the first-invited.

And finally, there are the last-invited—the poor, the handicapped, the strangers. They do not speak. They are voiceless, as the poor have been throughout recorded history. They simply come. And their response is silent testimony to their gratitude. They have not been forced to come, as Augustine so mistakenly and tragically interpreted this passage. If compulsion in the sense of physical force or state sanctions was to be used, it could have been employed already on the first-invited. The voiceless poor have freely responded to an urgent and sincere offer of grace. Suspicious interpreters may again impute all sorts of dark motives to these poor folk: Why not go along for a free ride? If the man wants to be a sucker, why not let him be one? From the standpoint of the text, however, all this is quite fruitless speculation. Prior to the surprising invitation, these poor and afflicted people lived in a climate of resignation and doom. The obvious reason why the poor came, out of all the many invited, was because they were hungry—hungry for food, yes, but hungry also for friendship, acceptance, and joy.

In Jesus' own ministry this parable was no doubt told to vindicate the good news that he proclaimed in word and deed. God's grace and forgiveness is reaching out to all, this parable announces, even to those long considered hopeless and worthless. The parable has come down to us in two traditions, one in Matthew and one in Luke. In its Lucan version the parable contributes to a vision of the church as the new messianic community which opens its doors to women, the poor, the out-

cast, and the Gentiles. In its Matthean version the parable offers a severe reminder to the community that not only have the first-invited already experienced God's terrible judgment but that even among the second-invited only those who wear the proper banquet garment (that is, the disciplined Christian life) will be permitted to remain in the banquet hall.

And today—how is this parable to be faithfully retold and read-dressed to us, we who are so sure that we do not make excuses for not attending God's open banquet, we who can only be stunned by the extravagant goodness of the mysterious benefactor, we who are puzzled and perhaps somewhat resentful of the poor who are invited to new life and joy and who respond so eagerly and spontaneously? Like the world of the parable, ours too is a world of stark contrasts. Hunger and fear stalk many parts of the world today while self-congratulation marches triumphantly through our land. While the two super powers of the world vie for supremacy in nuclear weapons, and while their leaders prefer to avoid sitting down to talk with each other let alone to eat and drink together, the poor and hungry of the world pay the highest price. Many people await an invitation to share food, friendship, and faith; they languish inside and outside the gates of our cities—in South Africa, in El Salvador, in New Jersey. Who will join these people as guests at a common table? Evidently not kings and queens of self-admiration. Apparently not those who are so smug in their praise of success and property and family that they have neither the

time nor the will to respond to an invitation to become members of a new and inclusive community of eating and drinking, beyond the petty boundaries of race and class and sex and nation. Surely not those who in the words of one of John Updike's characters are devoted to nothing more in life than "eating and drinking up the world, and out of sheer spite at that." Probably not those who sit in the high places of authority and are so apprehensive about the forthcoming letter of the American Catholic Bishops on Catholic social teaching and the United States economy that they are encouraging prosperous Catholics to "take a bishop to lunch."

So in a time of rampant chauvinism and of religion used to assure ourselves of our essential goodness and of the inherent wickedness of those we call enemies, who will respond to the voice of the host of the great banquet, "Come, for all is now ready"? Should we be surprised that now, as then, the poor, the lame, the blind, the outcast, will come silently, gladly, while so many others, also invited, tender their excuses? Not because the poor are better, more worthy, more God-like, but simply because they are so hungry, and they have been invited by a generous host.

There is a call to repentance in this parable, a shattering of our everyday world of eating and drinking, a great reversal of our genteel table protocol. Christ the host of the great banquet calls us to a reordering and transformation of all our cherished values, from the narrow family circle to the whole household of God, from occupation to vocation, from

the pursuit of possessions to the affirmation of people.

In this piercing parable of Jesus we are told first and foremost of God's grace. It is the will of the householder to share his food and drink with friends. This is, then and now, the staggering message of the gospel—that God's grace is free and extravagant, that God wants to share his life with us, that God wants us, each of us, as guests and friends at the open table.

The parable says more. It says that God's grace, God's shared life and friendship, is extended to all. The invitation goes out not only to good, decent people, but also to those seldom seen at the tables of the rich and righteous. At the table that God prepares all are welcome, even and especially the poor and weak of this world.

And there is still more proclaimed by this parable. Not only that God is gracious. Not only that the amazing grace of God is offered to all even though it is most readily and heartily accepted by the nobodies of the world. The parable also declares that God is a festive God who wills joy and fullness of life for his creatures. From this perspective, sin is not only a refusal of grace and a repudiation of open friendship. It is also a negation of genuine joy and unbounded festivity.

At the beginning of this academic year it is fitting that we gather at the Lord's table. We come from Latin America and North America, from Europe and Asia, from Africa and Australia. We are black and brown and yellow and white. We are male and female. We are young and old.

And yes, some are prosperous and others far from prosperous. But at this table we who are so different are called to be one people, guests of Jesus Christ who died and rose for us, brothers and sisters of each other and of the many others also invited to this banquet. If the open banquet is practiced here—really practiced—perhaps our ministries of peace and reconciliation elsewhere will be more credible to us and to others.

A philosopher once said: We are what we eat. This is true only in a trivial sense. Much more profound is the truth that we are what company we keep in our eating and drinking. Jesus opens the table of God to us all and frees us to eat and

drink together at the open banquet. Here God's costly word of Yes is said to each of us. In the presence of Jesus the very ordinary event of eating and drinking becomes something quite extraordinary: the beginning of an open community, the beginning of a friendship in suffering and hope with those who are poor and despised, the beginning of God's new, inclusive, festive humanity.

The invitation is still being extended to us today. In the background is an ominous warning, but in the foreground is a life-giving promise. It is, as ever, disturbingly, compellingly, exquisitely simple: "Come, for all is now ready."

The Irritant of Agnosticism

by EDWARD HULMES

A native of England, Edward Hulmes is Professorial Fellow in Theology at the University of Durham, England. He was previously Director of the Farmington Institute at Oxford, and has also spent five years in West Africa researching the relationship between Christianity and African Traditional Religion. Dr. Hulmes is the author of several books and numerous articles. This lecture is the first from the Students' Lectureship on Missions series, given in September 1984.

THE invitation has come to me to give this year's Students' Lectureship on Missions. There are three lectures under the general title of The Recovery of Mission. The first is "The Irritant of Agnosticism"; the second is "The Affirmation of Experience"; and the third is "The Education of Commitment." It will be part of my responsibility during the period of July to December 1985, when I am to be a member of the Center of Theological Inquiry in Princeton, to develop these lectures in book form.

My theme is the recovery of mission. For me this means an activity undertaken in obedience to the great commission given at the end of St. Matthew's Gospel. It is an activity which I take to be no less obligatory for Christians today than for their predecessors. Even so, it is not my intention to dwell on the recovery of mission as a task either joyfully or ruefully acknowledged by individual Christians, only because they are obliged to concede that it derives from a dominical command. My thesis is that the recovery of mission is a *practical necessity* at the present time. There are two aspects of this practical necessity. One is internal and the other external. With regard to

its internal application the recovery of mission helps to focus the individual believer's attention on the extent, limits, and limitations of personal belief. It serves to bring to self-conscious awareness the presuppositions, assumptions, prejudices, and convictions that are all too frequently left unexamined. With regard to its external application the recovery of mission directs attention away from the self, to the needs of the community. By this I mean that it channels what might otherwise remain a preoccupation with one's own personal beliefs, doubts, and aspirations, into a recognition of the needs of others. Part of this need, in societies such as ours, is that those who are not Christians are entitled to a thoughtful presentation of Christian insights from those for whom these insights, this experience, are, presumably, of some significance. In an age of religious pluralism, and at a time of developing inter-faith encounter, the recovery of mission assumes the nature of a practical necessity. For Christians who are exercised by belief and unbelief, by the possibility of certainty and the reality of doubt, and by the challenge to their existing convictions presented by other faiths and world

views, I contend that the recovery of mission is a practical necessity. With reference to the maturing of personal faith in Christ (not to say its possible modification in the light of scrutiny and experience, and even, conceivably, its eventual abandonment), and to the presentation of that faith to others who do not share it, the recovery of mission is also a practical necessity. And if I am pressed at this stage for a definition of *mission* in this context I would offer the words of 1 Peter 3:15. For the purposes of my argument this verse provides both a program and a method well suited to present needs.

The mission of the Christian church to, and in, the world has a long history. But what about its future? For many Christians, including some in positions of authority and leadership in the church, mission is an anachronism. It belongs to that phase of the church's life (so it is said) which stands in relation to us as the Old Testament stood to our first Christian forebears. Or if mission is still to be admissible it is only in terms of ambiguity, uncertainty, questioning, and what is described as "searching for God." And this is required of Christians themselves. All this is far removed from a confident theology of salvation for all believers, based upon the will of God for his creatures, revealed in history, and dependent to some extent at least on the cooperation of human beings to accept (or to reject) the revelation, and then to act in their turn as messengers (or opponents) of the revelation.

Our world, indeed our universe, is the stage for bewildering new revelations and accelerating technolog-

ical change. We are presented with a confusing picture of religious pluralism, of uncritical agnosticism, and of a "post-Christian Christianity" which is barely distinguishable from atheism, except for the lingering respect it pays to the importance in any society of myth, in this case, the myth of God and the myth of the redeeming work of Christ. At the same time our world is also the place where Christians are still prepared to give a reasoned defense to anyone who calls them to account for the hope that is in them. The surrender to skepticism and to agnosticism is premature. A recovery of the sense of mission among Christians, generally, may prevent any such premature surrender by helping us to understand what is really at stake. The grounds for *unbelief* as well as for belief, for agnosticism as well as for religious faith, need to be tolerably well understood. This is important when fundamentalists of one kind or another, philosophical and theological, bid to separate faith from reason, and reason from faith, and to emphasize "consciousness" and "experience" at the expense of history, tradition, faith, and reason.

Recently, during the course of his enthronement service sermon, a bishop of the English church described himself as "an ambiguous, compromised, and questioning person, entering upon an ambiguous office in an uncertain church in the midst of a threatened and threatening world." The sermon of which this was only a part (although an important and express statement of mood) contained several thoughtful comments on other aspects of society in Great Britain today, and at the

end of the proceedings the bishop received the accolade of applause from his congregation. It is only fair to add that for many others who heard the sermon in the cathedral, or subsequently heard of its contents, the bishop's note of uncertainty and diffidence appeared to be confined to theological matters. It certainly prompted some questions about the advisability of commending a recovery of Christian mission at a time when orthodoxy itself is expressed in terms of uncertainty, ambiguity, and doubt. The invitation, addressed even to Christians today, to take leave of God, to distance themselves from what I have heard described by another Christian acquaintance as "the fraudulent certainties" of orthodox belief, and to enter the real world of responsible autonomy, is not new. But it is still surprising. In a climate of uncertainty, it is a risk to describe anything as "fraudulent," with decent humility.

To the Christian involved in an encounter with someone whose beliefs are different, it is still necessary to try to identify with patience that which is characteristic and unique about Christianity. Without the attempt to do this any non-Christian partners in dialogue are left without an important element of knowledge as well as of testimony. Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Jews, Humanists, and others may know at least this much about Christianity, namely, that it continues to make massive affirmations about an alleged revelation of God in history. Interest in Christianity from outside should not be taken too lightly. It is not only Christians who may be interested in the faiths of others. When searching

questions come from those outside the Christian faith about Christian beliefs and practices will there be Christians prepared to answer? Is there anything unique about Christianity, or is it just another road to God?

Shortly before his death Max Warren wrote:

Reacting, and reacting rightly, against the dogmatic triumphalism of much past Christian approach to men of other faiths, it is all too easy to swing to the other extreme and talk happily of different roads to the summit, as if Jesus were in no particular and distinctive sense "the Way, the Truth, and the Life." Of course where this point is reached, the Great Commission is tacitly, if not explicitly, held to be indefinitely in suspense if not quite otiose. This is a view forcefully propounded by some Christians holding professorial Chairs in Britain and across the Atlantic. Are they right? Is courtesy always to preclude contradiction? Is choice now just a matter of taste, no longer a response to an absolute demand? Is the Cross on Calvary really no more than a confusing roundabout sign pointing in every direction, or is it still the place where *all* men are meant to kneel?¹

The answer to all Dr. Warren's questions may be "Yes," but it would be unreasonable for anyone to answer thus without considering the evidence. Our affirmations need to

¹ M.A.C. Warren, *I Believe in the Great Commission* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1976), pp. 150-151.

be subjected to personal scrutiny. Our presuppositions and convictions, whether we be scholars or not, need to be made explicit, to be informed and re-informed. The process is lifelong. In an important sense it is this process which is the subject of my three lectures, and I have called it, in both its inward (personal) and outward (societal) aspects, *The Recovery of Mission*.

In the science of biology I understand that "an irritant is anything that stimulates an organ to its characteristic vital function."² Thus, in the life cycle of the oyster, the boring parasite plays an important role in the creation of the pearl. The transformation of the former into the latter is not the work of a moment. The irritant of agnosticism is more, much more potentially, than an irritating, annoying feature of human existence, though it can certainly be that. It is, or can be, an *irritant*, with all that this implies for the shaping of human beliefs over a lifetime. And note that the metaphor I have in mind is essentially neutral, equally applicable to the unbeliever's dissatisfaction with unbelief and to the believer's identification of his present experience with that towards which he strives. "Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief."

The *Oxford English Dictionary* tersely defines "agnosticism" as "the doctrine, and tenets, of agnostics." The word "agnostic," often used in a much vaguer adjectival sense to describe someone who does not know, but in a rather different sense from that of the adjective "ignorant," receives a longer definition in the same

dictionary. Thus, "agnostic," is "One who holds that the existence of anything beyond and behind material phenomena is unknown and (so far as can be judged) unknowable, and especially that a First Cause and an unseen world are subjects of which we know nothing." In this sense the agnostic is one who, in his own estimation, is far from being ignorant. It is worth recalling that for those who began to use the word in the second half of the nineteenth century in England with this specialized meaning, agnosticism amounted to a conscious declaration of reasoned commitment. At one level the Victorian agnostics, of whom the best known was Thomas Huxley, were doing no more than reminding their contemporaries of the ineluctable limits of human knowledge. At the same time they were scrupulous in their attitude to atheism, preferring neither to affirm nor to deny the God of religion. God was set on one side, for about the ultimate origins and purpose of the universe, nothing was known, or knowable, in their considered view.

In less sensitive hands than Huxley's agnosticism soon assumed a more dogmatic character. Commenting on this, Gai Eaton, an English convert to Islam, wrote in a recent book:

Agnosticism . . . raises a personal incapacity to the dignity of a universal law. It amounts to the dogmatic assertion that what "I" do not know cannot be known, and it limits the very concept of what is knowable to the little area of observation open to the unsanctified and unilluminated human mentality. The agnostic attitude

² OED.

derives from a refusal to admit that anyone can be, or ever could have been, our superior in this, the most important realm of all; the true knowledge of what there is to be known. Religion is now seen exclusively in terms of faith rather than of supernatural knowledge. In egalitarian terms, faith is acceptable; you may believe in fairies if you wish to. But the claim to a direct and certain knowledge of realities beyond the mind's normal compass excludes those who do not possess it and savors of presumption. The idea that a saint among the saints may have *known* God—not merely *believed* in him—suggests “unfairness” and implies the superiority of some men to others. It puts us in our place.³

The rejection of the admissibility of any evidence that might be taken to suggest what Eaton calls “supernatural knowledge” seems to be less assured than it was formerly, although its negative consequences continue to influence the anti-theistic doctrines and tenets of sophisticated non-believers, as well as the shrill denials of folk or popular agnostics. Reviewing a recent book with the title *Is Christianity True?* A. J. Ayer concluded his piece with the words:

... the beliefs to which a Christian is supposed to subscribe appear to me so outrageously improbable that I am continually astonished that so many intelligent people are able to accept them.

Christian believers have contrived to keep Professor Ayer in a state of astonishment for a very long time, apparently, but his astonishment is barely concealed contempt. Bland and even decorous arrogance of this type, well-mannered as it affects to be, is less disconcerting to the Christian believer than its authors may suspect or intend. It is merely *irritating* to Christian (and other) believers because it insists that their knowledge and experience are only of subjective, emotional significance. By means of a careful use of words the critic suggests, rather than states, that intelligence and religious belief do not go together.

Of a different order from the irritating and superficial skepticism of Ayer, and potentially more disruptive for Christian belief, is the “Christian agnosticism” to be found in every branch of the church. It is clear that all Christians must remain Christian agnostics in some sense, as long as life lasts, because of the limitations of human existence. Our best knowledge is a partial knowledge, as St. Paul has it.⁴ Nevertheless, the knowledge which Christians recognize as partial is still knowledge. It may be little enough, but it is real, and it can be augmented. In this sense the Christian agnostic has much in common with other seekers after truth. But there is another aspect to Christian agnosticism which approaches *unbelief*. Can the Gospel be reinterpreted in such a way as to keep faith with the historic tradition, and yet be capable of speaking to the modern temper in a way that Newman, for instance, would recognize as an authentic development of doc-

³ *King of the Castle. Choice and Responsibility in the Modern World* (The Bodley Head, 1977), pp. 144-145.

⁴ 1 Corinthians 13.

trine? Or is the re-making of Christian doctrine, now being proposed in some quarters, so demonstrably discontinuous with the revelation and the tradition that those who advocate it are more correctly described as post-Christian, or even non-Christian?

It seems that large numbers of our contemporaries who admit to no more than the most tenuous links with institutional religion retain a residual interest in the religions of the world. I have no figures to support this, but it appears to be a reasonable inference, given the amount of time and money which television and radio companies are willing to expend on making programs about the religious beliefs and practices which influence the lives of millions. In Britain we have seen two such series, each devoted to a careful exploration of religious sentiment. The first was called *The Long Search*, the second, *The Sea of Faith*. Long as the search proved to be, its findings were always studiously impartial and inconclusive, though the incidental detail about how different communities of believers throughout the world live and worship was not without interest or visual charm. The waters of the sea into which we were invited to plunge in the second series were disappointingly shallow and untroubled. Neither series did much to unsettle the existing convictions of the skeptics who produced them, so far as a viewer could tell. On the other hand both series appeared to have the same effects on those who saw enough of them to make a considered judgment. The viewers whose religions were successively eyed through the camera tended to be disappointed that the result invariably

missed the essence of faith. They were wrong, perhaps, to expect anything else. A way of life is not to be captured by the fleeting images of a television screen. The reaction to the programs from those who had no formal religious faith or affiliation was also predictable. The variety of religious experience presented to them encouraged them to suspend judgment about the relative merits of the different systems of belief and practice. So far from being challenged by any of them in personal terms, the "prudent" observer, without even a residual loyalty to one of them, was lodged more securely in the inaccessible coziness of indifference and agnosticism that passes for considered neutrality.

Earlier this year the missionary bishop and apologist, Stephen Neill, died, aged over eighty. Many years ago, writing from his experience in India, he concluded:

When a man, by constant contemplation of the Passion and Resurrection of our Lord, finds himself so inflamed with love of God and man that he cannot bear the thought of any man living and dying without the knowledge of God, he may begin to bear the Cross of Christ. If, as he bears it, this longing for the glory of God and for the salvation of all men becomes so great that it fills all his thoughts and desires, then he has that one thing without which no man can truly be a messenger of Christ.⁵

And again, a few months before his death this year:

⁵ *Out of Bondage* (Edinburgh House Press, n.d.), pp. 135-136.

So, when we invite our friends of other faiths (and I would add "of none") to look at Jesus Christ, we should do so with a full sense of responsibility for what it may mean for them; if they should look on him and really see him. That might be for them the ending of an old world and the creation of a new; for if any man be in Christ, there is a new creation.⁶

After comments like these it is appropriate to ask whether the apparent inability of so many to believe, or their indifference to belief, has another cause. May it not be, at least partially, the consequence of the disinclination of those with good reason to know otherwise, namely Christian believers, to present the evidence for belief, in ways suited to needs of questioners, and the invitation to consider it? If there *is* something deep in men and women, some capacity for belief, some seed of faith, it would be a matter of concern if Christians were not to seek ways to provide for its nurture within our reputedly pluralist societies. Here would be an occasion for the recovery of mission, bearing in mind the point I made earlier about method, with reference to part of 1 Peter 3:15, "... yet do it with gentleness and reverence." For Christians who are also the inheritors of an intellectual tradition still dominated by a post-enlightenment mood of philosophical skepticism there is an opportunity to present an alternative to agnosticism in a responsible and non-interfering manner.

There is a remarkable passage in

⁶ *Crises of Belief* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1984), p. 286.

his introduction to an otherwise long-forgotten book⁷ in which C. S. Lewis writes as follows:

If we had noticed that the young men of the present day found it harder and harder to get the right answers to sums, we should consider that this had been adequately explained the moment we discovered that schools had for some years ceased to teach arithmetic. After that discovery we should turn a deaf ear to people who offered explanations of a vaguer and larger kind—people who said that the influence of Einstein had sapped the ancestral belief in fixed numerical relations, or that gangster films had undermined the desire to get right answers, or that the evolution of consciousness was now entering its post-arithmetical phase.⁸

Lewis puts his finger on the importance of what I would call the need for the recovery of Christian mission, as a *practical necessity*. And this has special implications for education.⁹ In the same passage Lewis goes on:

If the younger generation has never been told what the Christians say and have never heard arguments in defense of it, then their agnosticism or indifference is fully explained. There is no need to look any further; no need to talk about the general intellectual climate of

⁷ B. G. Sandhurst, *How Heathen is Britain?* (Collins, 1946).

⁸ *Ibid.*, Introduction, p. 10; subsequently included in C. S. Lewis, *Undeceptions* (London, 1971), p. 87.

⁹ The subject of my third lecture.

the age, the influence of mechanistic civilization on the character of urban life. And having discovered that the cause of their ignorance is lack of instruction, we have also discovered the remedy. There is nothing in the nature of the younger generation which incapacitates them for receiving Christianity. If anyone is prepared to tell them, they are apparently ready to learn.¹⁰

Lewis' last sentence takes us to the heart of the difficulty. To be prepared to "tell them," in Lewis' phrase, means more than to be *willing* to tell them. It involves *preparation*. A lengthy period of disinclination to "tell" blunts the capacity to do so when the right time comes. Like other skills it may be weakened or lost by disuse. Like other faculties it may fail for want of exercise. The converse is true. Proficiency, even when it remains modest, tends to improve with practice. Thus, to describe oneself as a practicing Christian need involve no affront to humility, for it expresses no finished state, no final achievement, merely a faltering process. It is (or should be) a signal of intent rather than a notification of attainment. Here again the guide to the Christian's approach is contained in the words of 1 Peter 3:15. The keynote is struck when, by reverencing Christ as Lord, the Christian is prepared to make a reasoned defense of the hope that is within, with gentleness and reverence, to anyone who asks.¹¹

The nineteenth century saw the sharpening of a sustained attack on Christian faith and practice, at least as far as western Europe was concerned. I add this rider because we should not be too parochial in these matters, assuming always that Europeans, either believers or non-believers, set the pace for the rest of the world. It is indisputable that the initial responses to the challenge presented to Christian orthodoxy by Darwinian theory lacked the sensitivity enjoyed by the author of the words from 1 Peter which have already been quoted. Today as the numerical balance of Christians moves from Europe and the United States to Latin America, to Africa, and to Asia, it is becoming clear that the tension between a scientific and a religious world view is less damaging to religious faith than in the days of Huxley and Darwin. And what is a factor of significance in connection with the recovery of mission is that European Modernism and Liberal Theology are no more attractive to newly independent and developing countries than nineteenth-century colonialism. "Death of God" theologies and expressions of Christian Buddhism may still retain a limited appeal in western Europe and in the United States, but they do not seem to have much to say to Christians in, for example, Eastern Europe, in the Soviet Union, or in China, where atheistic alternatives are not just theoretical abstractions. Nor, for

rendered as diffidence, is φόβος [. . . defined by Souter] as *fear, terror*, often fear on the reverential side, in reference to God, and such as inspires cautious dealing towards men. Cf. 1 Peter 1:17." *Invitation to Pilgrimage* (Penguin Books, 1960), p. 11.

¹⁰ In Sandhurst, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

¹¹ John Baillie's note on this text is interesting. He writes, "The word I render as deference, and which I might almost have

that matter, in parts of the world where Christians have lived alongside Buddhists for generations.

I have used the phrase "the irritant of agnosticism" as a metaphor to suggest a stimulus for long-term creative growth. Provided only that an individual is open to the possibility of fresh insights and deeper understanding, to new knowledge and profounder commitments, the metaphor may serve the needs of both believers and non-believers in times of uncertainty like the present. The claims of religious belief on the thoughtful *unbeliever* can also offer opportunities to Christians for the recovery of mission. The agnosticism which leads to unbelief is not always welcomed, by those who experience it, as a liberation from bonds. For them it is not that the belief of others who think differently from them is the irritant. It is their own agnosticism, their own inability to believe, that is the irritant.

During the high period of humanistic idealism in the second half of the nineteenth century, in which the statement that human beings were alone in the universe was somewhat defiantly accepted by an influential minority, some less strident voices could still be heard. Among them was that of the poet and literary critic, Matthew Arnold. His frequently quoted poem "Dover Beach" is often used today as an evocation of a mood of melancholy nostalgia for a past that can never return. The age of faith has come to an end. Cathedrals, parish churches, and the remnants of religious faith lodged in consciousness, are all fossil remains in the life of a people. My reading of

Arnold is not so sentimental. His faithlessness is not romantic. He expresses no satisfaction that men and women have finally been liberated from the fetters of an outworn creed.

The Sea of Faith

Was once too, at the full, and
round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright
girdle furled.
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long
withdrawing roar,
Retreating, to the breath
Of the night-wind, down the
vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the
world.

This twilight, and darkened,
world, in which the poet hears more
acutely because there is insufficient
light to see, is also the world where,
as he puts it:

We are here as on a darkling
plain
Swept with confused alarms of
struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by
night.

But the imagery which Arnold uses does not imply finality. The darkness of the night will give way to the dawn, and an ebbing tide flows strongly again. What is sometimes missing in the analysis of Arnold is his implicit *hope*. In re-reading Arnold, I sense that there may still be grounds for hoping that faith will return.

A second English poet for whom agnosticism is clearly an irritant is Thomas Hardy. From his poems I

choose one written in 1898. The title is most significant:

The Impercipient: (at a cathedral service)

That with this bright believing
band
I have no claims to be,
That faiths by which my
comrades stand
Seem fantasies to me,
And mirage-mists their Shining
Land,
Is a strange destiny.

Why thus my soul should be
consigned
To infelicity,
Why always I must feel as blind
To sights my brethren see,
Why joys they've found I
cannot find,
Abides a mystery.

Since heart of mine knows not
that ease
Which they know; since it be
That He who breathes All's
Well to these
Breathes no All's Well to me,
My lack might move their
sympathies
And Christian charity!

I am like a gazer who should
mark
An inland company
Standing upfingered, with,
"Hark! hark!
The glorious distant sea!"
And feel, "Alas, 'tis but yon
dark
And wind-swept pine to me!"

Yet I would bear my
shortcomings
With meet tranquility,

But for the charge that blessed
things

I'd liefer not have be.

O, doth a bird deprived of
wings

Go earth-bound willfully!

Enough. As yet disquiet clings
About us. Rest shall we.

To me this poem contains something of an authentic revelation about the human condition, and about the irritant of agnosticism, from an unbeliever's point of view. Note the way in which the poet echoes Arnold's image of the distant sea, heard but not seen. That one thing the poet would see, that vision he would share, is withheld from him. This is why he is condemned to count himself among the *impercipient*, those who lack perception. And not to know, not to see, is the real irritant, rendered more disconcerting by the fact that those in whose company he is have an experience which they are, apparently, unwilling to explain, to elucidate, or to share.

There is an incident in Acts 8:26-39 in which Philip approaches the Ethiopian eunuch with the question, "Do you understand what you are reading?" The Ethiopian answers, "How can I unless someone guides me?" Philip responds, and in the response the one man's agnosticism is met by the other's sense of mission, to the mutual edification of both. Hardy's anguish, we are left to assume, was met by no comparable response of Christian faith, hope, and love. He sits in the cathedral, isolated during a service in which he cannot participate fully. We do not know for what reason he was there. It may

have been the pressure of social convention. He may have been seeking for what he could not find. But none of this unwillingness to believe, this self-delusion in the search, this nostalgia, this self-confessed impercipientia, removes from the Christian the obligation to present the evidence for belief "with gentleness and reverence." And there *is* evidence to present. Christianity, in Austin Farrer's phrase, "appears to be credulity," but this is partly because Christians fail to present the evidence, or fail to dispute the boundaries of what their critics are prepared to admit as evidence. Without the recovery of mission the case may go by default.

This is the crucial point, quite literally. I know that the word *mission* is comparatively unpopular today, even among Christians. I understand the reasons for this. But I think that it is wiser not to cast about for more acceptable synonyms, in the hope that by so doing Christians will avoid giving unnecessary offense. As

with other important words with deeply Christian significance, such as the word *love*, the word *mission* can be reinstated, recovered, in fact. It permanently safeguards two essential elements, first the content of a message (the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ), and second, the reality of a commission (the sending and being sent) to bring that message to others. No critic should conclude that in saying this I want to turn back the clock, or that I have not paid sufficient attention to the changes brought about in a pluralist society by the mutual recognition of different religious experiences. On the contrary, it is precisely because I suspect that the wider ecumenism is suffering, for want of its distinctive contribution, that I advocate the recovery of Christian mission, both as a continuing obligation on the part of Christians faithful to the Great Commission, and as a matter of practical necessity.

Can the West be Converted?

by LESSLIE NEWBIGIN

A distinguished theologian, writer, and ecumenist, Bishop Lesslie Newbigin is known for his work in mission in India, where he was Bishop of Madras for the Church of South India. He was present at the founding of the World Council of Churches and was the director of its division of world mission and evangelism. He is the author of several books, including The Open Secret, an introduction to the theology of mission. The substance of this article is based on the Warfield Lecture series delivered by Bishop Newbigin in March 1984. The actual article is reprinted by permission of the Friends of St. Colm's, the Education Center and College of the Church of Scotland.

LET me begin by confessing that my title is a borrowed one. A dozen years ago, at the Bangkok Conference on "Salvation Today," I happened to be sitting next to General Simatoupong, that doughty Indonesian Christian who, having driven the Dutch out of his islands, turned to theology as the most agreeable field for the exercise of the arts of war. We were in plenary debate, and Simatoupong had just made an intervention. As he returned to his seat beside me, I heard him say under his breath: "Of course, the Number One question is, Can the West be converted?"

In the following years I have become more and more sure that he was right. If one looks at the world scene from a missionary point of view, surely the most striking fact is that, while in great areas of Asia and Africa the Church is growing, often growing rapidly, in the lands which were once called Christendom it is in decline; and, moreover, wherever the culture of the West, under the name of "modernization," pene-

trates, it carries with it what Lippman called "the acids of modernity," dissolving the most enduring of religious beliefs including the beliefs of Christians. Surely there can be no more crucial question for the world mission of the Church than the one I have posed. Can there be an effective missionary encounter with *this* culture—this so powerful, persuasive, and confident culture which (at least until very recently) simply regarded itself as "the coming world civilization." Can the West be converted?

I am posing this question at a time when, especially in evangelical circles, great attention is being paid to the question of Gospel and culture, to the question of the contextualization of the Gospel in different cultures. Recent missionary literature is full of the subject. "Contextualization" is an ugly word but a useful one. It is better than the word long used by Protestants—"indigenization"—which always tended to direct attention to the past of a culture rather than to its present and future.

And it is better than the traditional Catholic term "adaptation," which suggested that the missionary was the bearer of a pure, culture-free Gospel which had then to be adapted to the receptor culture, and thus concealed the fact that every statement of the Gospel from the New Testament onwards is already culturally conditioned. "Contextualization" directs attention to the actual context, shaped by the past and open to the future, in which the Gospel has to be embodied now. But why is it that we have a plethora of missionary studies on the contextualization of the Gospel in all the cultures of the world from China to Peru, but nothing comparable directed to the culture which we call "the modern world"?

I say "nothing comparable." There have of course been great theologians who have dealt with the question of Gospel and culture from within the parameters of this modern world—men like Paul Tillich and Richard Niebuhr. But these have not had the perspective which the experience of cross-cultural missions provides. Where can we find a cross-cultural perspective for the communication of the Gospel to modern societies? Can the experience of cross-cultural missions to the many pre-modern cultures of our world in the last two centuries illuminate the task of mission to this modern world? I am not forgetting the important experience of dialogue between Christians of the First and Third worlds, and between Christians and people of other world faiths. But this experience has a limited relevance because all of it is conducted in the European languages and therefore

within the terms which our modern western culture provides. No one takes part in them who has not been qualified to do so by a modern-style education in the European language. This kind of dialogue, with perhaps some exceptions, is too dependent on the language and thought-forms of the West to provide a radical challenge in the power of the Gospel to the West.

One of the most persuasive writers seeking to articulate a Christian affirmation in the terms of our culture is Peter Berger. As a sociologist, he has developed a way of using the sociology of knowledge not (as so often) to undermine but to undergird the Christian claim. In his book *The Heretical Imperative* he has argued that the distinctive fact about modern western culture, as distinct from all pre-modern cultures is that there is no generally acknowledged "plausibility structure," acceptance of which is taken for granted without argument, and dissent from which is heresy. A "plausibility structure," as Berger uses the term, is a social structure of ideas and practices which creates the conditions which determine whether or not a belief is plausible. To hold beliefs which fall outside this plausibility structure is to be a heretic in the original sense of the word *haeresis*, that is to say, one who makes his own decisions. In pre-modern cultures there is a stable plausibility structure and only the rare individual questions it. It is just "how things are and have always been." In modern societies, by contrast, we are required to make our own decisions, for there is no accepted plausibility structure. Each one—as we often say—has to have a faith of his

own. We all have to make our own decisions. We all have to be, in the original sense, heretics.

In this situation Berger describes three possibilities for Christian affirmation which he calls (not very happily) deductive, reductive, and inductive. The first simply selects one of the religious traditions and affirms it—preferably in such a loud voice that other voices are reduced to silence. Of this strategy he takes Karl Barth to be the most notable exponent. But, after a few respectful genuflections towards the great Swiss theologian, he rules him out of the debate. Even thirteen thick volumes of dogmatics are not enough if you cannot show rational grounds for choosing this starting point rather than another. It will not do simply to say "The Bible tells me so" if you cannot show reasons for choosing the Bible rather than the Q'ran, the Gita, or *Das Kapital*.

The second, or reductive, strategy is typified in the Bultmann program of demythologization. Here the fact that the "plausibility structures" of traditional religion simply collapse in the atmosphere of modern secular society is fully recognized. In effect, says Berger, Bultmann takes the beliefs of the modern secular town dweller as the criterion of what can be believed. When, in a famous phrase, Bultmann says, "one cannot use electric light and radio and call upon modern medicine in case of illness, and at the same time believe in the world of spirits and miracles of the New Testament," he is in effect taking the modern world view as ultimate, and this must in the end mean the abandonment of even these parts of the Christian tradition which

Bultmann seeks to safeguard. One does not need Jesus in order to endorse an existentialist view of life.

Berger therefore opts for the third alternative which he calls the inductive. This is to take the universal human experience of what, in another book, Berger calls "signals of transcendence," the religious experience which is the pre-supposition of all theologies whether of Barth or of Bultmann, of the Hindu, the Moslem, or the Buddhist, as the basis for religious affirmation. The paradigmatic figure here, of course, is Schleiermacher. The way he pointed is, according to Berger, the only way forward in the conditions of our modern secular world. The movement associated with the name of Barth is, in Berger's view, a temporary excursion into a blind alley, and we are now returning to the main road. To the obvious question, "How, amid the many different signals of transcendence, does one distinguish the true from the false?" Berger answers with the words of the Muslim theologian Al-Ghazali that they must all be weighed in "the scale of reason." He insists that in giving this answer he is not surrendering to a rationalism of the style of the Enlightenment. He defends what he calls "sober rational assessment" as the only way of distinguishing between true and false religious experience, but he does not attempt to describe the criteria for assessment or the grounds upon which these criteria rest. Perhaps the adjective "sober" has more than ordinary importance here, for the original context of Al-Ghazali's image of the "scale of reason" is a passage in which he likens the actual reli-

gious experience to a kind of inebriation and goes on, "The words of lovers when in a state of drunkenness must be hidden away and not broadcast," but later, "their drunkenness abates and the sovereignty of their reason is restored: and reason is God's scale on earth." This accords with Berger's own statement that religious certainty is "located only within the enclave of religious experience itself," and cannot be had except "precariously in recollection" in the ordinary life of the world.

It seems clear that the "sober rationality" with which we are to assess the value of different religious experiences does not belong to the enclave but to the public world outside. It is not a rationality which rests upon the religious experience but one which judges it. And it is not difficult to see that it is the rationality which rests upon the assumptions of our culture.

I believe that Berger is correct in his diagnosis of our culture in terms of the "heretical imperative." In contrast to all preceding cultures, ours has enormously extended the range of matters on which each individual has to make his own choices. A vast amount of what previous ages and cultures have regarded as given facts which must be accepted are now matters for personal decision. With the aid of modern technology, if he is wealthy enough, modern man chooses where he will live, whom he will meet, how he will behave and what style of life he will adopt. He can, if he has mastered the arts of "modern living," change at will his job, his home, his company, his entertainment, and his spouse. The patterns of belief and behavior which

ruled because they were not questioned have largely dissolved. Each person makes his own decisions about what to believe and how to behave. It is therefore entirely natural that religion too is drawn into this way of understanding the human situation. It is natural that religion too becomes a matter of personal choice. We are all now required to be—in the original sense—heretics.

But what are the implications of this? What are the implications of a division of human experience into two parts—the enclave where alone religious certainty can be had, and the public world where religious experience is to be "weighed in the scale of reason"? We come here to what is perhaps the most distinctive and crucial feature of the modern world view, namely the division of human affairs into two realms—the private and the public, a private realm of values where pluralism reigns and a public world of what our culture calls "facts." This dichotomy of the public and the private is something which is absent from traditional cultures. We shall have to look at it more closely. But let us accept it for the moment. Let us accept Berger's statement that in respect of what goes on in the enclave of religious experience we are all subject to the heretical imperative. But what about the public world where we all meet and where all things are weighed in the scale of reason? It is this world that we must examine if we are to understand modern culture. In this world pluralism does *not* operate. It is the world of what are called "facts" (we shall have to examine that word in a moment; meanwhile let it stand in its ordinary meaning). In respect

of what we call "facts" pluralism does not operate. Here statements are either true or false. If statements of alleged facts are in mutual contradiction, we do not take it as an occasion for celebrating our faithfulness to the principles of pluralism and freedom of thought. We argue, we experiment, we carry out tests until we reach agreement about what are the facts, and then we expect all reasonable people to accept them. The one who does not accept them is the real heretic. Of course he will not be burned at the stake, but his views will not be published in the scientific journals or in the university lecture rooms. In respect of what are called "facts," a statement is either true or false, right or wrong. But in respect of what are called "values," and supremely in respect of the religious beliefs on which these values are believed to rest, one does not use this kind of language. Value systems are not right or wrong, true or false. They are matters for personal choice. Here the operative principle is pluralism, respect for the freedom of each person to choose the values that he or she will live by.

Here, plainly, is the real plausibility structure which controls our culture and within which Berger himself operates, and which he takes for granted. His choice of the inductive method for dealing with religious truth-claims belongs to this plausibility structure. His "sober rationality," in contrast to the inebriation of religious experience, is the rationality of this world view. The inductive method which he espouses has been basic to the whole development of the modern scientific world view from the time of Bacon and

Galileo. Looked at from the point of view of the Gospel its value is both real and limited. It is a valid way of coming to the truth because the created world is both rational and contingent—rational as the creation of God who is light and not darkness, contingent because it is not an emanation of God but the creation of God who has endowed it with a measure of autonomy. Because this is so, a Christian would argue, the study of things and happenings in the created world can give us true understanding of them. That is the foundation upon which science rests. But the inductive method has a validity which is limited in that it cannot decide the question by whom and for what purpose the world was created. The answer to that question cannot be reached by any method of induction until the history of the universe has reached its terminus; short of that point, the data for a valid induction are not available.

Within the world view of modern science it is perfectly possible and proper to insist, as Berger does, that the phenomena of religious experience should be studied along with all the other facts that are available for our inspection, and that conclusions should be drawn by induction from these studies. In this way it is proper to challenge the kind of narrow positivism which has sought to deny cultural acceptance to the phenomena of religion. Berger is a true follower of Schleiermacher in commending religion to its cultured despisers, in seeking to show that there is a place for religious affirmation *within* the "plausibility structure" of the modern scientific world view. But this whole procedure leaves that

world view unchallenged. The whole method simply excludes the possibility that it might actually be the case that the one who is creator and sustainer and sovereign of the universe has personally made himself known at a certain point in the human story. Any such claim is simply bracketed with other claims to be included in a syllabus for the comparative study of religion. It has been silenced by co-option into the modern scientific world view. The Gospel is treated as an account of something which happened in one of those many enclaves in which religious experience takes place. It has to be brought out of the enclave into the public world to be weighed in the scale of reason along with all the other varieties of religious experience, and on the basis of all the facts.

At this point we come to the crux of the matter. What, in our culture, is the meaning of the word "fact"? In its earliest use in the English language it is simply the Latin *factum*, the past participle of the verb to do, something which has been done. But plainly it has acquired a much richer meaning. In ordinary use "fact" is contrasted with belief, opinion, value. Value-free facts are the most highly prized commodities in our culture. It is upon them that we think we can build with confidence. "Fact," says Alasdair Macintyre, "is in modern western culture a folk-concept with an aristocratic ancestry." The aristocrat in question is Lord Bacon who advised his contemporaries to abjure speculation and collect facts. By "speculation" he referred primarily to the Aristotelian belief that things were to be understood in terms of their purpose. But in advising his

contemporaries to collect facts, he was not launching a program for magpies collecting any odds and ends that might be lying about. That is not how modern science was born. The new activity was shaped, as every rational activity must be shaped, by another speculative framework—namely the belief that things should be understood in terms not of their purpose but of their cause, of how they work. Facts thus became value-free, because value is a concept related to the purpose for which a thing either is or is not well fitted. Here is the origin of what Macintyre called the "folk-concept" of "facts" which dominates the consciousness of modern man. There is, in this view, a world of facts which is the real world, an austere world in which human hopes, desires, and purposes have no place. The facts are facts and they are neither good nor bad; they are just facts.

It follows that the scientist uses a different kind of language from the religious person. Religious statements are normally prefaced by the word, "I believe," or "we believe." In textbooks of science no such preface is used. The writer simply states the facts. And it is this world of facts which is our shared public world. Our values, our views of what is good and bad, are a matter of personal opinion, and everyone is free to have his own opinions. But on the facts we must all agree. Here is the core of our culture, the plausibility structure in relation to which we cannot be heretics and remain part of society, the area where pluralism does not reign. Facts are facts.

But are they? If we go back to Bacon and the beginnings of modern

science we can see that what happened was that different questions were being asked about the things with which people had always been familiar. The Greeks had asked the question, "Why," and had tried to explain (for example) motion in terms of purpose. Modern science asks "How," and tries to explain things in terms of cause and effect. Both questions are—of course—proper, but neither by itself is enough to bring full understanding. You can set out to understand the working of a machine in terms of the laws of physics and chemistry, and you can give a complete account of its working in these terms. But it would be foolish to say that you "understand" the machine if you have no idea of the purpose for which this assembly of bits of metal was put together in this way. And it is certain that, if you have no idea of its purpose, there is no meaning in calling it good or bad. It just is. If, on the other hand, you know what it is for, you can and must judge it either good or bad according to whether or not it achieves its purpose.

Alasdair Macintyre in his book *After Virtue* has chronicled the attempts which have been made in the past 200 years to find a rational basis for ethics within the modern scientific world view. He demonstrates two things; first, that the morality for which a basis was sought was one carried over from the pre-scientific age; and second, that all attempts to ground ethical precepts in the "facts" as science understands them have failed. As Kant and others have insisted, from statements of fact, "This is so," you cannot move logically to statements of value or ob-

ligation: "This is good," or "This ought to be done." But this is only so if "facts" have already been defined in such a way as to exclude purpose. To take one of Macintyre's examples: from the factual statement, "This watch has not lost five seconds in two years," you may immediately conclude, "This is a good watch"—provided that "watch" is already understood as an instrument for keeping time. If "watch" means only a collection of bits of metal which can be used according to the personal preference of its owner for decorating the sitting room or for throwing at the cat, then no such conclusion follows. If "watch" is understood only in terms of the physics and chemistry of its parts, no such conclusion follows and everyone is free to have his or her own opinion as to whether it is a good watch or not.

This simple illustration takes us, I think, to the heart of the matter. "Facts," as our culture understands them, are interpretations of our experience in terms of the questions "What" and "How" without asking the question "Why." And facts are the material of our public, shared culture, the culture into which we expect every child to be inducted through the system of public education. That human nature is governed by the program encoded in the DNA molecule is a fact which every child is expected to understand and accept. It will be part of the school curriculum. That human beings exist to glorify God and enjoy him forever is not a fact. It is an opinion held by some people. It belongs to the private sector, not the public. Those who hold it are free to com-

municate it to their children in home and church; it has no place in the curriculum of the public schools and universities. And since the publicly accepted definition of a human being excludes any statement of the purpose for which human beings exist, it follows necessarily that (in the ordinary meaning of the word "fact"), no factual statement can be made about what kinds of behavior are good or bad. These can only be private opinions. Pluralism reigns.

Here, I submit, is the intellectual core of that culture which, at least from the mid-eighteenth century has been the public culture of Europe, and has—under the name of "modernization"—extended its power into every part of the world. Two hundred years ago it was hailed in Europe as, quite simply, the dawning of light in the darkness: the Enlightenment. And it still bears that glow about it. For millions of people all over the world what we call the modern scientific world view is accepted quite simply as the true account of how things in fact are, in contrast to the dogmas, myths, and superstitions of traditional religion.

And we must gratefully acknowledge the immense achievements of these past two centuries. Who can deny to the men of the Enlightenment and their successors the credit for liberating the human spirit from many ancient fetters, for penetrating the secrets of nature and harnessing nature's power for human purposes? Surely this has been the most brilliant period in human history thus far, and we are—with all our weaknesses and perplexities—its heirs. It would be easy at this point to throw in some remarks about the signs of

disintegration which our culture is showing—the loss of faith in science, the skepticism about our ability to solve our problems, the disappearance of belief in progress, and the widespread phenomena of anomie, boredom, and the sense of meaninglessness. But let us, for our present purposes, ignore all this. Let us rather ask what is involved in a real encounter between the Gospel and this culture of ours at its best and strongest. Let us attempt something quite different from what Berger proposes. Instead of weighing the Christian religious experience (along with others) in the scale of reason as our culture understands reason, let us suppose that the Gospel is true, that in the story of the Bible and in the life and death and resurrection of Jesus the creator and lord of the universe has actually manifested himself to declare and effect his purpose, and that therefore everything else, including all the axioms and assumptions of our culture have to be assessed and can only be validly assessed in the scales which this revelation provides. What would it mean if, instead of trying to understand the Gospel from the point of view of our culture, we tried to understand our culture from the point of view of the Gospel?

Obviously to ask that question is to suggest a program for many decades. Let me simply suggest four points as prolegomena to the answering of the question.

1. The first point to be made is that modern science rests upon a faith which is the fruit of the long schooling of Europe in the world view of the Bible. Historians of science have devoted much thought to the ques-

tion why the marvelous intellectual powers of the Greeks, the Chinese, the Indians, and the Egyptians, in spite of their achievements in science and mathematics, did not give rise to the self-sustaining science which has dominated our culture for the past two hundred years. Briefly the answer seems to be that modern science rests upon the faith (which of course can never be proved) that the universe is both rational and contingent. If the universe were not rational, if different instrument readings at different times and places had no necessary relation with each other but were simply random facts, then science would be impossible. Scientists are sustained in their long and arduous labors by the faith that apparent contradictions will eventually be resolved because the universe is rational. But if that were all, science would not be necessary. If there were no element of contingency, if all that exists necessarily existed as the outward expression of pure rationality, then all the experimenting, exploring, and testing work of science would be unnecessary. If—as India has tended to think—all that exists is emanation from primal being, then pure contemplative reason alone is enough for making contact with reality. If the world were not rational, science would be impossible; if the world were not contingent, science would be unnecessary. Because it is a rational world, but not the only possible world, we both can and must bestir ourselves to find out what kind of world it is. Science rests upon a faith which cannot be demonstrated but is simply presupposed, and the roots of this faith are in the biblical story which shaped the life

of Europe for the one thousand years before modern science was born.

2. The second point is this. Modern science achieved its great breakthrough in the seventeenth century by setting aside the question "Why?" and concentrating on the question "How?" It left the question of purpose to what Bacon called the speculation of philosophers and theologians and concentrated on the question of cause. It asked of everything not "What is its purpose?" but "How does it work?" That question gave unlimited scope for probing, dissecting, exploring, and experimenting. Purpose is a personal word. It implies a mind which has a purpose real in the mind though not yet realized in the world of objects; it can be known only by listening to the person whose purpose it is. But for understanding cause we have to examine what is already there in the world of objects. This is a different kind of enterprise, as different as dissecting a brain to find out how it works is from listening to a person to find out what he means. Both are proper activities in their proper place. But clearly the elimination of the question of purpose can only be a methodological strategy; if there were no such thing as purpose then the scientist could have no purpose in adopting this strategy. The scientist acts purposefully when, as a decision on method, he investigates cause and ignores purpose. Plainly it is an error to move from this decision on method to the conclusion that there are no purposes at work in nature other than the investigative purpose of the scientist.

3. The third point is as follows. Human beings are also part of na-

ture and can be investigated by the methods of modern science. For this purpose they are treated as objects whose behavior can be understood in terms of cause and effect and without reference to their alleged purposes. The practitioners of what are called the behavioral sciences seek to formulate laws of human behavior analogous to the laws of physics and chemistry. On the basis of these laws the administrator, the civil servant, and the advertising consultant seek to direct or influence human behavior. In doing so, they are crediting themselves with a capacity for purposeful activity directed to rationally chosen ends, a capacity which the method denies to those who are investigated. We are familiar with the spectre of the ultimate achievement of this kind of scientific management of human affairs in the various scenarios for genetic engineering. At this point we are bound to ask the question: What will direct the behavior of those who use the methods of science to direct human behavior? Science itself cannot provide the answer to this question because its method eliminates purpose as a category of explanation. If there is a purpose to which in fact all human life ought to be directed, this purpose cannot be discovered by the methods of science. The scientist has his own purposes, but they have no basis in the world of "facts." They are his personal choice. Science acknowledges no objective world of values in the light of which his purposes could be judged right or wrong. And since the scientist, like every human being, has different purposes at different times, and since his method excludes the possibility of an objec-

tive criterion for judging between these purposes, he is left under the control of whichever is the strongest impulse of his nature. He becomes, in fact, an agent of nature. Man's mastery of nature turns out in the end to be nature's mastery of man. We have been conned by the oldest trick in the book. Marching triumphantly forward we failed to notice the jaws of the trap closing behind.

4. Fourth, this way of understanding things which we call the modern scientific world view has now achieved global dominance. There is, of course, no way in which it can be proved to be the truth about things from outside of its own pre-suppositions. When, as those who have served as missionaries know, it meets older traditional views, such as those of India and Africa, which are equally coherent and equally compelling to those who dwell in them, the decisive argument has usually been: Look! Our view works. It delivers the goods. Look at our machines, our medicines, our technology. It works! Today we are not able to give that answer with the same confidence. We acknowledge the enormous achievements of the modern scientific world view, but its failures are becoming apparent. It is not opening for us a rational view of the future. We can no longer say, as we did a generation ago, "This is just how things are." And more to our present purpose, it will no longer do for Christianity to accept, as P. Berger invites us to do, a position in one of the enclaves of this culture, even as one of its privileged old age pensioners. It will no longer do to say that the Christian faith is one among the possible private options available within the pa-

rameters of this culture. It will no longer do to confuse the fact of plurality with the ideology of pluralism—the view that since no one can really know the truth we must be content with a multiplicity of opinions. It will no longer do to accept the dichotomy between a public world of so-called “facts” and a private world of so-called “values.” We shall have to be bold enough to confront our public world with the reality of Jesus Christ, the word made flesh, the one in whom the eternal purpose of almighty God has been publicly set forth in the midst of our human history, and therefore to affirm that no facts are truly understood except in the light of him through whom and for whom they exist. We shall have to face, as the early Church faced, an encounter with the public world, the worlds of politics and economics, and the world of science which is its heart. It will not do to accept a peaceful co-existence between science and theology on the basis that they are simply two ways of looking at the same thing—one appropriate for the private sector and one for the public. We have to insist that the question, “What is really true?” is asked and answered.

I confess that when I say these things I feel alarmed, for I can hardly imagine all that they will entail. And yet I cannot avoid believing that they are true. Nearly one hundred fifty years ago W. E. Gladstone wrote these solemn and prophetic words:

Rome, the mistress of state-craft, and beyond all other nations in the politic employment of religion, added without stint or scruple to her list of gods and god-

desses, and consolidated her military empire by a skillful medley of all the religions of the world. Thus it continued while the worship of the Deity was but a conjecture or a contrivance; but when the rising of the Sun of Righteousness had given reality to the subjective forms of faith, and had made actual and solid truth the common inheritance of all men, then the religion of Christ became, unlike other new creeds, an object of jealousy and of cruel persecution, because it would not consent to become a partner in this heterogeneous device, and planted itself upon truth and not in the quicksand of opinion. . . . Should the Christian faith ever become but one among many co-equal pensioners of a government, it will be a proof that subjective religion has again lost its God-given hold upon objective reality; or when, under the thin shelter of its name a multitude of discordant schemes shall have been put upon a footing of essential parity, and shall together receive the bounty of the legislature, this will prove that we are once more in a transition state—that we are travelling back again from the region to which the Gospel brought us to that in which it found us.

What Gladstone foresaw is essentially what has been happening in the years since he wrote. The end result is not—as we imagined twenty-five years ago—a secular society, a society which has no public beliefs but is a kind of neutral world in which we can all freely pursue our self-chosen purposes. We see that now

for the mirage that it was. What we have is, as Gladstone foretold, a pagan society whose public life is ruled by beliefs which are false. And because it is not a pre-Christian paganism, but a paganism born out of the rejection of Christianity, it is far tougher and more resistant to the Gospel than the pre-Christian paganism with which foreign missionaries have been in contact during the past two hundred years. Here, without possibility of question, is the most challenging missionary frontier of our time.

Can the West be converted? God alone knows the answer to that question. I do not see except in the dimmest way what would be involved in a serious response to this challenge. I can only see that it must mean great changes in the way we see the task of the Church. There is no space at the end of this lecture to do more than suggest the headings of an agenda that will take decades rather than years to undertake.

1. I would put first the declericalizing of theology so that it may become an enterprise done not within the enclave, in that corner of the private sector which our culture labels "religion," but rather in the public sector where God's will as declared in Jesus Christ is either done or not done in the daily business of nations and societies, in the councils of governments, the boardrooms of transnational corporations, the trade unions, the universities and the schools.

2. Second, I would place the recovery of that apocalyptic strand of the New Testament teaching without which Christian hope becomes merely hope for the survival of the

individual and there is no hope for the world. The silencing of the apocalyptic notes of the Gospel is simply part of the privatization of religion by which modern culture has emasculated the biblical message.

3. Third, I would put the need for a doctrine of freedom which rests not on the ideology of the Enlightenment but on the Gospel itself. The world will rightly distrust any claim by the Church to a voice in public affairs, remembering that the freedom of thought and of conscience which the Enlightenment won was won against the resistance of the Church. But the freedom which the Enlightenment won rests upon an illusion—the illusion of autonomy—and it therefore ends in new forms of bondage. Yet we have no right to say this until we can show that we have learned our lesson: that we understand the difference between bearing witness to the truth and pretending to possess the truth; that we understand that witness (*marturia*) means not dominance and control but suffering.

4. Fourth, I would affirm the need for a radical break with that form of Christianity which is called the denomination. Sociologists have rightly pointed out that the denomination (essentially a product of North American religious experience in the past two hundred years) is simply the institutional form of a privatized religion. The denomination is the outward and visible form of an inward and spiritual surrender to the ideology of our culture. Neither separately nor together can the denominations become the base for a genuinely missionary encounter with our culture.

5. Fifth, there will be the need to listen to the witness of Christians from other cultures. The great new asset which we have for our missionary task is the presence among us of communities of Christians nourished in the cultures of Asia, Africa, and the West Indies. We need their eyes to see our culture afresh.

6. But finally, and this is fundamental, there will be the need for

courage. Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood but against the principalities and powers—realities to the existence of which our privatized culture has been blind. To ask, "Can the West be converted?" is to align ourselves with the Apostle when he speaks of "taking every thought captive to Christ," and for that—as he tells us—we need more than the weapons of the world.

Shall the Moral Majority Prevail?

by CONRAD H. MASSA

A native of Brooklyn, New York, Conrad H. Massa is an alumnus of Columbia University and Princeton Theological Seminary. He has served churches in Rochester, New York, and East Orange and Newark, New Jersey, and was an assistant professor of homiletics at Princeton Seminary. Dr. Massa is presently Charlotte W. Newcome Professor of Practical Theology and Dean of the Seminary at Princeton. This sermon was preached in Miller Chapel on September 27, 1984.

Text: *And behold, there was a man with a withered hand. And they asked him, "Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath?" so that they might accuse him. He said to them, "What man of you, if he has one sheep and it falls into a pit on the sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift it out? Of how much more value is a man than a sheep! So it is lawful to do good on the sabbath." Then he said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And the man stretched it out, and it was restored, whole like the other. But the Pharisees went out and took counsel against him, how to destroy him. (Matthew 12:1-14)*

THE tie between religion and morality, very much in the news in these days, is inevitable, but it is a relationship which has been marked by ambiguity for as long as humans can remember. Historically it is not difficult to demonstrate that what one religion has forbidden another has required; what one religion has denounced as sinful, another has permitted as morally neutral; what one religion has fought to obtain as a social good, another has just as vehemently opposed as an oppressive wrong. There is no automatic correlation between religious belief and what is described as any particular time as morally acceptable behavior.

Jesus Christ lived in a time when religious prescriptions had the standing or the force of civil law and social custom. These prescriptions described what was religiously acceptable, morally respectable, and le-

gally responsible. Civil order was therefore thought to be dependent upon retaining the religious structures, and public morality was believed to be dependent on the outward observance of religious practices. The Gospels make it clear that Jesus, by relegating the public observance of some (perhaps all) religious practices to a secondary position for himself and his disciples, was thereby a threat to the social and moral stability of the community.

The situation was heightened in the incident where Jesus was challenged to heal a man on the Sabbath. It was like a gauntlet being thrown down before the fact. "Is it against our Law to cure on the Sabbath?" Jesus reminded them that if they had a sheep which had fallen into a deep hole on the Sabbath, they would lift it out. So, he indicated, it is lawful *to do good for a man* which he then

proceeded to do for that man with the crippled hand. This was a violation of the law which stipulated that medical assistance could be rendered on the Sabbath *only* to save a life. Jesus simply declared that he was Lord of the Sabbath. In the similar account to this incident in Mark's Gospel, Jesus adds, "The Sabbath was made for the good of man; man was not made for the Sabbath."

Thus Jesus took this philosophical question of the relation of morality and religion and made it into the theological question of the relationship between law and grace. When we see this we understand the radical difference which Jesus Christ and the Christian faith make. That radical difference is an expression of the new relationship between God and humanity which was incarnate in Jesus Christ. Too many who call themselves Christian today still have not recognized and assimilated that radical difference!

A cartoon appeared in a Minneapolis newspaper. Three boxes. In the first Jesus is saying "Let him who is without sin, cast the first stone." Second box, a fusillade of rocks hurling through the air. Third box, Jesus is saying "Damned Moral Majority!" The Moral Majority is confronting us with the issue of law and grace. They would ask Jesus, "Is it wrong to heal on the Sabbath?" They would expect Jesus, moral man that he was, to say, "Yes, it is wrong." The Moral Majority has not figured out how to deal with change and diversity in human conditions. They yearn for the world as they *want* it to be. They look back on a time as they *think* it was. They must *not* be permitted to prevail, however, be-

cause *they would make their morality our religion.*

In the cartoon strip *Peanuts*, Lucy is talking with Marcie: "I have it all figured out, Marcie . . . the way I see it, there seem to be more questions than there are answers." "So?" "So, try to be the one who asks the questions." There is theological wisdom in that. The question always sets the agenda and identifies the priority. So every Christian who is exercising discipleship in the world will understand herself or himself not so much as one who knows the right answers but as one who knows and asks the right questions.

Look at the sensitive issue of the day, abortion. The Moral Majority is against it. So is everyone. I have counselled with women about abortion and I have never met or heard of one who had gotten pregnant so she could consider abortion. If we permit the question to be simply, "Are you for or against abortion?" we would all have to answer, at least, that we think abortion is undesirable. But that isn't the right question! Because that isn't the question as it confronts us in human existence where the question comes in a person who is suffering inner turmoil.

If we are going to cast such a question in hypothetical or generalized terms, we must look at what *is*, not at what we would like the world to be. We would *all* like a world in which no child was conceived who was not wanted. But the world is not like that. So Jesus saw a law which was against healing on the Sabbath. Then he looked at the crippled hand of a man standing before him. It was a paradigm of the way human need presses in upon us.

It never comes at a convenient time and it never comes in the previously described formulations. People with crippled hands should come on Tuesday or Wednesday. Thursday is a good day. My schedule is lighter then. But this paradigm of human need makes it clear that human suffering does not come like some convenience food, packaged to be opened at *our* convenience. This man came to Jesus on that *inconvenient* and unlawful Sabbath, and Jesus reached out and healed him, sending him into his future a whole man.

So the question is, "What do you do about a social situation in which each year tens of thousands of women who become pregnant do not want to bring that pregnancy to full term?" A response which looks at the human being in her predicament says, "You make a variety of options available to such women so that their individual differences and situations may be given due regard as they exercise their human dignity of choice." Even to phrase the question that way requires empathy. It requires us to enter with compassion into the predicament of another human being to help bring it to a healing conclusion.

Jesus did not respond to the reality of human need with answers framed in non-existent situations. He was, if anything, practical because human suffering touched him so deeply. Many of you undoubtedly read the remarkable interview which Lech Walesa, the Polish labor leader, gave to *Time* magazine shortly before his detention a couple of years ago. He said, "I don't believe . . . in holding Mass at Solidarity meetings. . . . All of us cannot be dressed as priests. Somebody has to be in the

factory, somebody must commit sins. . . ." ¹ Somebody must commit sins! That could only be said by a Christian who had to struggle in the kind of complex social and political milieu in which Lech Walesa lived and worked to bring about humane solutions. Lech Walesa knows that there are no pat answers, but he lives by the grace of Jesus Christ where the law seeks to define the limits of his humanity and his morality. He knows he will sin in making choices—but he knows he will sin more if he does not exercise that human responsibility and dignity. He believes in a God who forgives sin through Jesus Christ.

The Moral Majority, and those who think like it, must *not* prevail because they represent the triumph of law over grace, a reversal of the Gospel which makes a travesty of the freedom of human choice and response. The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath!

The Moral Majority must *not* prevail because they represent the triumph of morality over Christian faith and make a travesty of the sovereignty of God. Jesus said, "I am the Lord of the Sabbath."

The Moral Majority must *not* prevail because they represent the triumph of nostalgia over hope as they seek to reconstruct a past rather than to claim and to shape a future. Jesus said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And it became whole—as does every life which dares to reach out to him in faith.

Ours is the tradition of the good news of the grace of God in Jesus Christ. Professor John Leith of Union

¹ *Time*, January 4, 1982, p. 34.

Theological Seminary, Richmond, has written, "Tradition is the living faith of dead people. Traditionalism is the dead faith of living people. For this reason tradition is a source of the church's vitality and traditionalism the occasion of its death."²

God grant that in our striving here at Princeton Seminary after God's

truth and the richness of the Christian tradition, we may have what Peter Gomes of Harvard has described as "thinking hearts and loving minds" as we seek to live in and by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

² John H. Leith, *Introduction To The Reformed Tradition* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1977), p. 31.

Should Affluent Adults be Admitted to the Lord's Supper?

by NORMAN D. POTT

A native of New Jersey, Dr. Norman D. Pott has received degrees from Wheaton College, Princeton Theological Seminary, and the University of Edinburgh. Active in ecumenical and presbytery affairs, Dr. Pott is currently pastor of the Community Presbyterian Church in Davis, California, and has also served as adjunct professor at San Francisco Theological Seminary. It is customary to invite the newly elected Alumni/ae Trustee to preach in Miller Chapel in October in conjunction with the fall meeting of the Board of Trustees.

Text: Then the children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked the people; but Jesus said, "Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven." And he laid his hands on them and went away. (Matthew 19:13-26)

IN our congregation in Davis we are facing the question of whether children should be included in our celebrations of the Lord's Supper. I wish I could say that we were approaching that question out of a Biblical theological perspective or with the guidance of the church's long tradition, but the issue turns more on the weightier issues of, "What will other people think if my child wiggles too much or makes too much noise?" or "I take care of the kids all week long; won't you allow me thirty minutes of peace?" If we can consider the possibility of sanctuary for homeless refugees, how about some sanctuary for harassed parents? But flying in the face of such concerns we are boldly forging ahead; the children will be in worship for the whole service, at least on the first Sunday of the month when we celebrate the Sacrament, and the resolution of all of our questions is forthcoming: Will the children be still and quiet? Will the children be

able to understand and receive what is happening? Will parents survive?

The basis for our decision in Davis is found in the first part of our morning Scripture from Matthew's Gospel, in the no questions, no barriers, no requirements, all-inclusive, free ticket invitation of Jesus, "Let the children come."

In Matthew 19 the children present no problem. The question in Matthew 19 is whether adults should be admitted to Communion, or at least wealthy adults. Jesus, reflecting on the inability of a good man to divest himself of all of his baggage, says, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." Now as a middle class American living in Davis, California, I find that I can usually maneuver out from under that remark. I am not one of the rich. The rich are Michael Jackson, Dave Winfield, J. Paul Getty, or anyone from Saudi Arabia. With very selective vision I can find a lot

of people who have much more of this world's goods than I have. But we have just celebrated World Communion when we are encouraged to extend the borders of our usual frame of reference outwards to embrace a global community, and when I place myself in any kind of world context then I am no longer able to dodge this word of Christ.

Robert Heilbroner, in his *Inquiry into the Human Prospect*, gives us some very graphic suggestions for enabling us to identify with more than a billion of our fellow human beings who live on an income of less than two hundred dollars a year. Take all the furniture out of the house except for a few blankets and perhaps a kitchen table and chair; empty the cupboards except for a little flour, sugar, salt, a few potatoes, a dish of fried beans; dismantle the bathroom, shut off the water, take out the electrical wiring, in fact take away the house itself and replace it with a shack or tool shed; cancel all newspaper, magazine, and book club subscriptions; move the nearest hospital or clinic ten miles away; eliminate the car; eliminate all bankbooks, stock certificates, and pension plans; think of the land you live on as your only viable means of support and begin to cultivate it knowing that a third of the crop will go to the landlord and a tenth to the money lender, and finally lop off about twenty-five to thirty years of life expectancy for every member of the family.

There is nothing in my experience that even remotely connects with that—though I must admit that the first thing that came to mind was beginning my married life in Hodge Hall in the fall of 1954, back in the

good old days when you had to stick a chair out in the hall to announce to the other inmates that you were using an iron because more than one iron at a time was likely to black out the building. But still Heilbroner's portrayal is so far removed from even that experience of Seminary deprivation that it is facetious even to mention it. If I set myself in any kind of world community as our faith encourages us to do continuously then I can only conclude that I am in a small minority of the world's wealthiest people, the very ones who are the hardest to squeeze into the kingdom. So that when the disciples observe that it is impossible to thread needles with camels I squirm just a bit, and find some relief in the response of Jesus because it seems to leave the door open at least a crack for us rich people. "With God all things are possible."

So I want to look at those God-given possibilities. One thing I am almost certain of after all these years is that no one is likely just to give it away, to divest voluntarily, that's about as rare as camels making it through needles. Nor do I think we will ever be able to legislate it. The Council in John Calvin's Geneva tried in 1558 to curb excesses of wealth and lifestyle through what were called "Sumptuary Laws," designed to clip the excess from the rich and distribute it among the needy, but predictably this legislation failed for lack of community support, and Calvin concluded that contributions to the work of the Deacons posed a more effective and positive channel for addressing the needs of the poor.

That says to me that neither will-power nor force are enough. The

crack in the door, the possibility of the kingdom for us rich folk, will come when the church is being itself and is continuously creating the channels of giving and serving that will inspire me to share out of my excess with those who are less fortunate. It will only happen when the church is being itself and putting us in positive relationship with people here and everywhere.

When I ask myself the question, at what point in their lives are people willing to give sacrificially for the sake of others, I conclude that this quality is most visible in the giving of parents to their children. Parents are ready to accept almost any cost in order that their children might enjoy all of the advantages of this society. The church then needs to enlarge our sense of family out into the world community, giving us many new brothers and sisters and sons and daughters for whom sacrificial giving will become a natural response.

Finally, the church, when it is being itself, is deluging us with possibilities for action, for service, for giving. Yesterday it was the Peacemaking offering, next week the fall pledge campaign begins, then the Christmas offering, in January the Presbytery's New Church Development Campaign, the One Great Hour of Sharing follows on the heels of that,

then the Crop Hunger Walk, and interspersed are all the appeals from all the organizations who have managed in some mysterious way to get my address, including of course Princeton Theological Seminary. It's so easy to become calloused and say, "I'm being nicked and dined to death," and then turn your back on the whole pile. Perhaps looking again we may be able to see this parade of causes as possibility and opportunity, as God's gracious persistent effort to keep us soft, pliable, and in touch with our human family, and perhaps in some marvelous miraculous way to coax us into the kingdom through that beautiful escape clause, "all things are possible with God."

Jesus actually said two things to the young man. The first he heard loud and clear, "sell what you possess and give it to the poor," but he really didn't hear the second and vitally connected part of the invitation, "Come and follow me." The two belong together. They are simultaneous. It is only in coming and following that we will ever be able to give it all away and it is only through giving it away in witness, in service, in stewardship, in the quest for justice and peace that we can receive and experience the World Communion that is God's precious gift to us all.

BOOK REVIEWS

Crenshaw, James L., ed. *Theodicy in the Old Testament*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983. Pp. 176. \$6.95 (paper).

This volume, number four in the *Issues in Religion and Theology* series, offers a collection of eight essays published between 1905 and 1975 on various aspects of the title topic. Four of these essays are made available for the first time in English translation. The essays discuss Old Testament theodicy in connection with the following subjects: providence and covenant (W. Eichrodt), Ancient Near Eastern backgrounds (R. Williams), divine retribution (K. Koch), Jeremiah's confessions (G. von Rad), Job (A. S. Peake), Psalm 73 (M. Buber), Sirach (J. Crenshaw), Koheleth (H. Gese). Editor Crenshaw's introduction highlights ways in which various Old Testament writers tended "to save God's honor by sacrificing human integrity" (p. 7).

The volume as a whole is successful insofar as it gathers important and representative essays on the topics listed above. It is especially good to have Koch's argument against a theory of divine retribution available in English. What is lacking, however, is any editorial indication of how the essays were selected or (more important) how they have figured in scholarly discussion subsequent to their original publication. Koch's 1955 essay, for example, has provoked considerable debate in the last three decades; yet the uninitiated reader would have no idea that the discussion had taken place. The concluding four-page bibliography is helpful, yet since it is unannotated it does not really alleviate the non-specialist's problem of reading the essays in a vacuum, without a clear sense of their historical impact or current viability.

KATHARINE DOOB SAKENFELD
Princeton Theological Seminary

Murphy, Roland E., O. Carm. *Wisdom Literature and Psalms*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1983. Pp. 158. \$6.95 (paper).

Roland Murphy's contribution to the *Interpreting Biblical Texts* series makes effective use of the series format. He introduces

the reader to key features of Israel's wisdom literature, as developed by modern scholarship, lays out his own interpretive assumptions as he considers the role of such material in the life of the church, and offers representative illustrations of these scholarly and hermeneutical concerns at work from both canonical and deuterocanonical literature. A similar treatment of the Psalter occupies the last third of the volume.

As a long-recognized specialist in wisdom literature, Murphy is well equipped to sift through the vast literature on the subject. The resulting statement of scholarly consensus on the origins and features of biblical wisdom literature in its Ancient Near Eastern context is admirably concise and clear. Murphy's discussion of "cultural baggage" and of "tensions and conflicting viewpoints" within the Bible raises issues essential to any constructive consideration of this portion of the canon.

While the volume offers useful review and reflection for pastors, it will be useful primarily for beginners in biblical studies who seek an orientation to the meaning of wisdom writings for Christians today.

KATHARINE DOOB SAKENFELD
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Walaskay, Paul W. *"And So We Came To Rome": The Political Perspective of St. Luke* (Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 49). New York (Cambridge and London, UK): Cambridge University Press, 1983. Pp. 121. \$27.50.

"Luke was decidedly pro-Roman and he intended, in part, to present an apologetic on behalf of the empire to his own church" (p. 13). The thesis of Paul Walaskay contradicts the traditional interpretation regarding the political perspective of Luke-Acts, which sees the apologetic moving in the opposite direction, an apologetic on behalf of the church to the empire. Walaskay seeks to show that such an interpretation turns the evidence upside down, and that the sources indicate rather that Luke has written an *apologia pro imperio* to the early church.

Walaskay begins in the first chapter (pp. 1-14) by reviewing the development of the traditional perspective of politics in Luke-Acts. He briefly surveys the Tübingen approach, the reaction against Tübingen, the classic presentation of Luke's *apologia pro ecclesia* as represented by H. J. Cadbury's *The Making of Luke-Acts* (1927), the redaction critical approach, and the current perspective, which has a more neutral leaning. He notes the increasing uneasiness among contemporary scholars to accept the traditional view that Luke wrote an *apologia pro ecclesia*.

In the second chapter (pp. 15-37) Walaskay poses three questions: First, did Luke present a politically harmless picture of Christianity? In this section he presents materials concerning Simon the Zealot, Jesus' command to buy swords (Luke 22:35-8), Jesus as lord and king, and the ending of Acts. Second, how does Luke handle the anti-Roman sentiment expressed in his sources? In this section special attention is given to Luke 13:1ff. And third, are there passages in Luke-Acts that not only indicate a pro-Roman bias, but suggest an *apologia pro imperio*? Walaskay presents the decree of Augustus as a positive backdrop to the birth of Jesus (Luke 2:1-5), the preaching of John the Baptist to the crowds, the tax-collectors, and the soldiers (Luke 3:10-14), the payment of tribute to Caesar (Luke 20:20-6), and Jesus' discourse on kings and benefactors (Luke 22:24-7). This last question is pursued in more detail by an investigation of the trials of Jesus (chapter 3, pp. 38-49) and Paul (chapter 4, pp. 50-63) as they are presented in Luke-Acts. The book ends with some concluding remarks on the political perspective of Luke. The book is very well documented throughout (of the 121 total pages, pp. 68-103 are extensive notes), provides a thorough bibliography, and includes an index of passages cited.

At the very least, this book is valuable for challenging the longstanding interpretive tradition that sees in Luke-Acts an *apologia* to the empire on behalf of the church. The book succeeds in calling to our attention the simple observation that the primary audience for Luke-Acts was the early church and not the Roman Empire. It is in light of this observation that Walaskay asks the reader to rethink along with him the underlying evidence and assumptions that have sustained this tradition.

In the end, however, Walaskay's thesis is intriguing but unconvincing. He overstates Luke's positive view of imperial authority, interpreting Luke's concern that the church be able to live peaceably within the Roman Empire as a pro-Roman apologetic. Is it really the case that "God's plan for salvation is being worked out in concert with the continuing history of the Roman empire" (p. 26)? Does Luke envision a Holy Roman Empire? Did the first century Christians, especially in Palestine, embrace the Augustan reforms as a sign that the Roman Empire was now being used as a divine agent whereby the gospel might be spread?

As Conzelmann and others have shown, Jerusalem is central to Luke. Walaskay acknowledges this, but goes on to argue that "the goal of Luke's two volumes, from beginning to end, is Rome" (p. 62). Accordingly, "the Christians have only this to understand: That the Roman government has been divinely chosen to act out the prophecies of Jesus; the empire has a significant place in the divine plan for the salvation of the world" (p. 48). Is Luke's vision really that "the church could stand in partnership with the empire" (p. 66)? The reader wishes that Walaskay would have spelled out in more detail the exact nature of this "partnership."

Certainly Rome is important, especially within the schema of Acts, but to assign the motif of an *apologia pro imperio* so prominent a role within Luke-Acts creates as many problems as Walaskay hopes to solve. The book does succeed in raising the question of Luke's political perspective in a creative way. Walaskay provides a helpful survey of the traditional interpretation and a thoughtful and challenging counterthesis. But in the end Walaskay's portrayal of Luke-Acts as an *apologia pro imperio* overstates the evidence at hand.

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Weber, Otto. *Foundations of Dogmatics*. Vols. 1 & 2. Translated by Darrell L. Guder. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1981 and 1983. Pp. xv + 659 (vol. 1) and xiv + 721 (vol. 2). \$27.00 (each).

The English translation of Otto Weber's two-volume *Grundlagen der Dogmatik* is a happy event for pastors, teachers, and students of theology. Originally published in 1955 and 1962, this impressive work has had until now only a limited if highly appreciative circle of readers outside of Germany. Thanks to the prodigious translation efforts of Dr. Darrell Guder, Weber's text is now available to a much wider readership.

Otto Weber was Professor of Reformed Theology at the University of Goettingen from 1934 to his death in 1967. Closely associated with the theology of Karl Barth, he is best known in the English-speaking world for his one-volume digest of Barth's multi-volume *Church Dogmatics*. (Barth once described Weber's summary as like a small tugboat which guides a huge ocean liner out to sea.)

While lacking the striking originality and constructive power of Barth, Weber was nevertheless a distinguished theologian in his own right. A careful thinker and a first-class Calvin scholar, his command of the history of doctrine was masterful. His prowess as a historian of doctrine helps to make his two-volume *Dogmatics* one of the most learned and judicious productions of neo-orthodox theology. Writing when the controversy between Karl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann had polarized the Protestant theological world, Weber wanted to avoid onesidedness in his own work and intended to provide readers with a balanced theological orientation, rooted in a respectful, although not uncritical receptivity to the classical Reformed tradition, and of course, especially to Calvin and Luther as expositors of the Word of God.

Although written more than two decades ago, Weber's work can still serve as an admirable resource for pastors and seminarians. His central theme is the covenant faithfulness of God decisively revealed in Jesus Christ as attested in Scripture and made efficacious through faith by the power of the Holy Spirit. Like Barth, Weber sought to avoid reducing the gospel to a system of thought and emphasized that faith is the joyful personal response of men and women to the free grace of the living Lord rather than the acceptance of a set of ideas or doctrines. Also like Barth, Weber was an active churchman for whom the reality of the community of faith was always accorded a certain priority over the faith of the individual.

Again, like Barth, Weber pursued Dogmatics not for its own sake but for the sake of more faithful Christian praxis, i.e. more biblical and more self-critical Christian proclamation and discipleship.

While the influence of Barth's theology is everywhere discernible—in the doctrine of the threefold form of the Word of God, in the critique of natural theology, in the pervasive christocentric orientation, to mention only a few examples—Weber sometimes goes his own way. Unlike Barth, Weber takes up the doctrine of election not as part of the doctrine of God but like Calvin, as the conclusion of the doctrine of grace and as the transition to ecclesiology and eschatology. According to Weber, the doctrine of election does not deal with abstract decrees of God in himself. Weber agrees with Barth's criticisms of the traditional construal of the Reformed doctrine of the eternal decrees of God whereby some individuals are chosen for salvation and others for damnation. Properly understood, the doctrine of election has to do with the sovereignty of the grace of God offered to humanity and with the basis of confidence in the faithfulness of the God of free grace who addresses us in the proclamation of the gospel. But while the content of Weber's exposition of the doctrine of election is very close to Barth's, Weber appears to have feared that Barth's highly original treatment inclined toward a speculative universalism.

Also in contrast to Barth, Weber argues that at the center of Christology is an irreducible paradox that cannot be rationalized. Therefore the use of paradoxical statements is required. In Weber's view, shared by Berkouwer and other critics of Barth, there is a tendency in Barth to rationalize the christological mystery. This supposedly takes the form of an absorption of the earthly history of Christ into its trinitarian background. Here again Weber is suspicious of what he construes as a speculative element in Barth's thought. Weber mentions in particular Barth's revival of theopaschitism by the way he speaks of the obedience, humility and suffering of God. The issues involved here are still very much alive in contemporary theology.

Yet another example of Weber's disagreement with Barth concerns the latter's identification of the image of God with the co-humanity of male and female. Weber contends that while the sexual distinction is

the most prominent and ineradicable sign of humanity's being in the image of God, this image is constituted by interpersonal, I-Thou, relationality.

Probably most conspicuous and most important of Weber's disagreements with Barth is in regard to infant baptism. Like Barth, Weber is aware of the problematic of infant baptism as a church practice in modern western society. He does not attempt to establish its validity on the basis of traditional exegetical argumentation. For him the issue is not whether infants were baptized in the New Testament church (the historical evidence points to a negative judgment). The real question is whether the New Testament understanding of baptism *permits* infant baptism, and Weber argues that it does.

In general, Weber's theology is more cautious, more reserved, less daring, less independent, less provocative than Barth's. Barth himself thought it a fault in Weber's work that he labored so long over accurate portrayals of the views of others that his own position was not sufficiently developed. Barth's judgment notwithstanding, Weber's *Dogmatics* is one of the major statements of Reformed theology in the 20th century. Pastors and theological students will find in Weber's two volumes a very high-quality and comprehensive, even if now somewhat dated presentation of Christian doctrine from a Reformed perspective.

Guder's translation is both faithful and readable. The splendid editing of the footnotes enhances the value of the text for the English reader. In a massive translation effort like this an occasional slip is understandable. One occurs when the original, "Die Schrift ist Meisterin ueber das Dogma," is rendered, "Scripture is mistress of dogma," instead of "Scripture is sovereign over dogma" (Vol. 1, p. 38).

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Cobb, John B., Jr. *Process Theology as Political Theology*. Manchester, England and Philadelphia, PA: Manchester University Press and The Westminster Press, 1982. Pp. xvi & 158. \$8.95 (paper).

John Cobb, in the spirit of his circuit riding heritage, is always taking process the-

ology on the road—to theologies, disciplines, social movements, and religions near and far; moving from one engagement to the next with enviable energy, clarity, and commitment to inquiry, and with a style of argument that resorts neither to easy reconciliation nor to caricature and insult. In *Process Theology as Political Theology*, Cobb takes up the "challenge" of political theology through a conversation with the German theologians Johann Baptist Metz, Jürgen Moltmann, and Dorothee Sölle. The form of the book is dialogical, but the purpose is constructive: "My aim is to become a political theologian in the tradition of process theology" (p. xi).

Cobb surveys briefly the history of the term, "political theology," and its distinctive meaning in the thought of Metz, Moltmann, and Sölle. For these theologians, "political theology" represents a critical and self-critical stance vis-à-vis the social order rather than its religious sanction, and a concern for "the indivisible salvation of the whole world" (Sölle) in contrast to the "privatization" of the Gospel in modern Christian theory and practice.

His introduction of process theology as a partner in this dialogue is especially intriguing, for Cobb locates process theology in the tradition of the Social Gospel and the socio-historical method of biblical and theological interpretation identified with the Chicago School. He acknowledges that process theology has fallen into a more abstract and apolitical mode of thought, especially under the influence of Charles Hartshorne and Henry Nelson Wieman. But this recovery of "narrative memory" sets the stage for a conversation between two essentially political theologies.

In the remaining chapters, Cobb develops this conversation with specific reference to: 1) theological method, focusing on the political interpretation of the Gospel, the significance of the narrative structure of memory for Christian faith, and the priority of *praxis*; 2) the doctrine of God; 3) the relation of theology to politics, cast primarily in terms of the capitalism-socialism debate; 4) the status of nature in political theology; and 5) the interpretation of history. On each topic, Cobb summarizes the argument of Metz, Moltmann, or Sölle, assesses its contribution to process theology, and offers a critique and constructive alternative on the basis of process thought.

Certain themes appear throughout Cobb's analysis. He is a persistent critic of absolutes, whether hermeneutical, theological, or political. Secondly, he offers a subtle defense of theory. Specifically, he argues that an adequate political theology requires a systematic doctrine of God and of history, and that the conditions for "radical self-criticism" in cross-cultural and other contexts with diverse "horizons of meaning" are not met by the *praxis* model of current political theology (pp. 60-61). Thirdly, Cobb calls for a deeper and wider understanding of relatedness at every point—in the interpretation of Christian narrative memory, and in the relations of Christian faith and other faiths, humanity and nature, and the world of God.

By virtue of its dialogical organization, *Process Theology as Political Theology* establishes important points of contact between process and political theologies, illuminating both convergence and divergence. In the process, Cobb raises fundamental issues: the nature and status of biblical interpretation as well as philosophical inquiry in theology—whether the horizon of political theology is anthropocentric or "ecological" (inclusive of nature). And his observations regarding German political theology are often insightful and provocative, for example on the relation between an anthropocentric (and, specifically, urbanized and industrialized) perspective on history and the advocacy of development defined in terms of GNP (i.e., getting people into the money economy) instead of, say PQLI (which measures infant mortality, life expectancy and literacy rather than per capita income) (pp. 95 & 120ff).

However, this approach also has its limits. It is not conducive to the comprehensive and systematic argument that a political theology founded on a process interpretation of God and the world requires. One clue to the problem is the absence of an analysis of the meaning of justice or, for that matter, of "politics" (a failing of the German political theologians as well, as Cobb notes on p. 13). Secondly, a political theology in the tradition of the Chicago School needs to be more explicit about the criteria of evaluation of alternative analyses of public issues and their status within the framework of political theological inquiry.

Nevertheless, Cobb's *Process Theology as Political Theology* is a valuable discussion of the critical elements and dilemmas of a po-

litical theology and a timely call for process theologians to provide an intelligible and appropriate interpretation of the Christian foundations of the struggles for justice and peace in our time.

LOIS GEHR LIVEZEY

Princeton Theological Seminary

Lucyk, Stanford B. *Growing Amid the Thistles*. Burlington, Ontario, Canada: Welch Publishing Co., Inc., 1983. Pp. 132. \$7.95 (paper).

A book of sermons by the senior minister of Canada's largest Protestant church creates a measure of real interest and deserves careful evaluation. The blurb on the jacket says, "Both the radio audience and the congregation of the Timothy Eaton Memorial Church (Toronto) are already indebted to the senior minister for his clear and intelligent presentation of the Christian faith as it relates to the complex issues facing each of us in Canada today." The volume comprises six clusters of sermons under group headings: Basic Christianity, Life's Crises, Prayer, Feminism, Hosea, and Jewish/Christian Dialogue. It is a miscellany of treatises and the author seems to adopt Milton's strategy in his poem, *Lycidas*, where he said "he touched the tender stops of various quills."

Each of the eighteen sermons is short and no one can accuse this preacher of belaboring any subject or issue. He has read widely and consulted the biblical commentaries; modern literary figures are quoted frequently, although one is puzzled over the absence of contemporary theologians and the better writers of today's religious literature. His grasp of biblical history and Hebrew culture is commendable, although often his factual catalogue of names, places, and persons would scarcely be grasped even by a professional audience. Much of this sort of material would defy freedom of delivery (*à la* Scherer or Weatherhead) and if read, would be deadly.

Any connoisseur of sermons will take usually into account: literary style, form, theology, and message. In all of these this series of sermons falls short: (a) Literary style: there is here a dominant essay-like style which may recruit readers but alienates hearers. Lucyk over-quotes and makes some paragraphs a rash of inverted commas. Idioms, al-

lusions, fragments tumble out in freshets and, like Macbeth, we are inclined at times to cry HOLD! Moreover, there is a plethora of oddities: Calvary is always "skull hill"; "God self" placates those who eschew male pronouns for Deity; "navel grubbing" is gauche; "Jeshua" (for "Jesus") is not a little fanciful among derivatives; and somewhat insensible are sentences such as "that bit of animated Hebrew clay quivered and went limp on a chunk of Roman wood stained with blood and body waste" (this out-Swaggerts Swag-gert!).

(b) Fosdick, that exemplary sermon craftsman, emphasized constantly the necessity of an object in every sermon. This gives shape, movement, and purpose to one's homiletical product. This is a lack in so many modern sermons which comprise frequently a series of impressions loosely related theme-wise, but never propelling us logically or emotionally to a verdict or conclusion. Lucyk is a cousin of these; he is a static thinker, hence these sermons do not carry us so much towards a geometric Q.E.D., as to a bothersome "So what?"

(c) Theologically Lucyk is an Old Testament Christian. There is no sign here of a Trinitarian faith. His realism about our sinfulness is clear and his multiple references to sex, divorce, anti-Semitism, etc., indicate a sensitivity to the obtuse mores of any metropolitan constituency, but at the same time we miss glimmerings of the need for and the splendor of the re-born life and the victorious note of the Easter faith. Indeed one senses by the over-abundance of Hebraic adulation almost a mild cynicism concerning the triumphalism of Christ. Without the framework of an over-arching and positive Gospel, mere word studies can lead into biblicism and to an absence of theological wholeness necessary to match the voices of the world.

There is, however, in these sermons a realism and humanity that much of our preaching needs. Some of the illustrative material here is "old hat"; yet several sketches of life situations are powerful. What we are needs certainly to be dramatized in our preaching; what we ought to be is unattainable without the completely positive message of the New Testament.

DONALD MACLEOD
Princeton Theological Seminary

Buerlein, Homer K. *How to Preach More Powerful Sermons*. Richmond, VA: American Historical Foundation, 1984. Pp. 199. \$14.95 (paper).

In his Foreword to this book, Albert C. Winn remarks: "Most books on preaching are written by preachers or teachers of preachers. The voice of the congregation is seldom heard in the conversation." Books on preaching from the perspective of the pulpit are legion; apart from George W. Pepper's Yale Lectures in 1915 (*A Voice from the Crowd*), however, no thoughtful monograph has pursued the theme in dialogical format such as we have here. To read this book is to hear enlightened feedback from the pew and whether a preacher is just starting out or a veteran of some decades of sermonizing, none can fail to find here some of his or her faults exposed and some adequate remedies ready to hand.

The author, a Presbyterian elder, and executive vice-president of the American Historical Foundation in Richmond, VA, has listened to sermons for fifty-five years, yet he develops his theme intentionally within limits, and wisely so. He does not venture into the content area of preaching; that is not on the agenda of his expertise, although I wager he could hold his own with the average preacher rather competently. His focus is upon form, style, literary and vocal principles, and the rapport and effectiveness the best of these achieve with a worshipping congregation.

Buerlein writes in a clear, clean style, and although this book is largely theory, the author never divorces it from persons, largely because he comes through as a very human individual himself. He does not carp; he has a high respect for the ministry; moreover, from his wide range of acquaintances and of auxiliary reading, his judgments have perspective and invariably make good sense.

Altogether there are twenty-three chapters here, covering nearly every aspect and facet of communications theory relative to preaching. Happily his discussions are not pedestrian; continually he surprises us with fresh examples and shrewd perceptions. His aim is to make sermons more palatable and as a litmus test in classroom or study, any sermon would profit from his instruction. This is a practical book in which the message

is easily practicable for anyone willing to accept its challenge.

A few errata occur: Swezey is misspelled "Sweazy" and his book is *Preaching the Good News* (p. 62). Homiletical, not "homilectical" (p. 151). Buffon's quote is less pointed than his *Le style est l'homme même* (p. 89). Fosdick urged ONE hour in the study for every minute in the pulpit (not one-half hour).

DONALD MACLEOD

Princeton Theological Seminary

Capps, Donald. *Life Cycle Theory and Pastoral Care*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983. Pp. 127. \$5.20 (paper).

One of five books already published in Fortress's Theology and Pastoral Care series (Don Browning, editor), this book asks: what is the role of pastoral care in helping persons become better oriented in their world? In pursuit of answers to this question, Donald Capps has produced yet another fine volume for those involved in both the theory and practice of pastoral care.

The "orientation motif" is borrowed from Erik Erikson's life cycle theory, and in this motif Capps sees an issue of vital importance for pastoral care, especially in the modern, and often fragmented, world. The middle chapters of the book discuss three threats to our orientation in the world: the loss of moral order, the loss of coherence and meaning in life, and severe suffering. In a corresponding fashion, three roles for the pastor are discussed which Capps believes can begin to address these threats: the pastor as moral counselor, as ritual coordinator, and as personal comforter.

The book's first chapter, "Erikson's Life Cycle Theory," is the best short exposition of Erikson's thought that I have read yet. One immediately recognizes this book's value as a text in any course pertaining to the human life cycle. Especially helpful is the way in which Capps helps us to appreciate the negative aspects of Erikson's bipolar framework: *some* mistrust, doubt, guilt, etc., are necessary for healthy development to occur.

The genius of this book is the way it helps us to understand at a deeper level elements which are so common to all of our lives. We all go through "stages," we all struggle with vices, we all have our rituals, we all know the severity of pain. Yet with careful analysis

Capps shows us what these things mean in terms of our orientation or disorientation.

The book is not completely free of weaknesses, however. The difficulty with a model building method such as Capps' is that one occasionally wonders whether things have not been a bit forced or contrived to get a perfect fit. For instance, when a correlation of Erikson's moral virtues with traditional "deadly sins" confronts an eight to seven mismatch, Capps is forced to divide the classic vice of sloth into indifference and melancholy. Though there is historical precedence for the split, one could still argue as to which correlations would make the most sense. Another weakness is a certain incongruent treatment of the theme of orientation. In the third chapter, which focuses on the importance of ritual for maintaining a sense of meaning and coherence in life, Capps seems to advocate that while many aspects of life will change, some few must remain steadfast if a healthy sense of orientation is to be attained. Yet in the final chapter, "Pastoral Care as Therapeutic Wisdom," he suggests that the wisdom tradition of our Judeo-Christian heritage provides only an "order-within-relativity." Given the importance of the orientation motif to the overall structure of the book, this ambiguity is unfortunate.

But the book's most important weakness pertains to the second chapter on the pastor as moral counselor. Capps embraces the stand taken by Don Browning (*The Moral Context of Pastoral Care, Religious Ethics and Pastoral Care*) that pastoral care should have a self-consciously moral dimension. I have no quarrel with this point as such, but what I find lacking in Capps's treatment (and in Browning's too for that matter) is any discussion of how sensitive pastors can overcome reservations about giving moral counsel, when they can see the "immoral" aspects of themselves all too clearly. In short, how does one reconcile Romans 7, with the role of moral counselor? In a book which intends to focus on those doing pastoral care (p. 13), some struggle with this issue is greatly needed.

Yet these faults notwithstanding, the book provides most insightful reading. If only for gaining a clearer understanding of Erikson's theory our efforts would be justified. But the unique contribution of the book's fourth chapter makes it all the more compelling. Here Capps takes one distinct element of the Eriksonian model, shame (which is the bi-

polar opposite of autonomy in the second stage), and explores its theological depths in an unparalleled fashion. Capps has long been interested in the theme of shame (see his inaugural address, "The Parabolic Event In Religious Autobiography," in *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* IV, 1). With the possible exception of Carl Schneider, whose *Shame, Exposure, and Privacy* appeared in 1977, no one has done more to make us aware of the theological significance of shame than Capps.

In this volume, Capps treats shame as paradigmatic of severe pain, suggesting that an embracing of pain is at the heart of the Christian experience. He encourages us to do as Augustine did in his *Confessions* and share in the prayerful presence of God the painful exposure which shame occasions. When our hidden, shameful self is taken as the core of our Christian identity, we are forced to trust completely in God's grace. (I would question, however, whether Capps actually means what he says on p. 91, that in so exposing ourselves "we create the inner climate in which God becomes revealed to us." Such conditionality pertaining to grace is strangely inconsistent with the freedom of God on which Capps focuses in the final chapter.)

Capps's treatment of shame will undoubtedly cause us to be surprised both by how much we already know of the emotion from experience, and how useful an understanding of shame can be in our pastoral work. This fourth chapter is one that will make you lean back, sip the coffee, puff the pipe, and *think*.

The book concludes by offering a model for pastoral care as therapeutic wisdom. Here one of Capps's strengths surfaces clearly: his knowledge and use of the biblical materials. He grounds the model in the Old Testament wisdom literature, particularly Proverbs, but then places it in creative tension with the parabolic tradition of the New Testament. Thus he argues that our sense of orientation can develop as our sense of God's gracious presence is enlarged by surprising parabolic encounters.

For those who want to know where pastoral theology is headed, this book can point the way. And its straightforward, unembellished prose makes it delightful reading.

BRAD A. BINAU

The Graduate School
Princeton Theological Seminary

Gerkin, Charles V. *The Living Human Document*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984. Pp. 224. \$10.95 (paper).

This book by Charles Gerkin, professor of pastoral psychology at the Candler School of Theology and the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, Emory University, is the third major work in the area of pastoral theology and pastoral care to come out of Atlanta in the period of but one year. In 1983, E. Brooks Holifield, a colleague of Gerkin's at Emory, published a major work entitled *A History of Pastoral Care in America* and John Patton, executive director of the Georgia Association for Pastoral Care, published a most important clinical work, *Pastoral Counseling, A Ministry of the Church*, thereby giving Atlanta bragging rights, at least, for being on the cutting edge of this area of practical theology.

This work is important for at least two reasons. First of all it is a work dealing with the theory and practice of pastoral counseling that is written by a person involved in the ministry of counseling as well as teaching. Far too often books dealing with pastoral counseling and pastoral care themes have been written by academics long retired from active ministry or having never been involved in ministry at all. On the other hand, however, this work is no facile "how to" or "hints and helps" piece of therapeutic technology far removed, save for some ecclesiastical lip service, from theological sensitivity and scholarly competence. The subtitle of the book gives some hint of the theological integrity the reader will encounter: *Re-Visioning Pastoral Counseling in a Hermeneutical Mode*.

Gerkin's thesis is a very shrewd one. Using the work of Anton Boisen, the founding father of the modern pastoral care movement, Gerkin argues that much psychopathology or personal problems are based on a disjuncture between ideas and meanings and common experience. Emotional crisis occurs "... at a point of blockage or distortion in the process of interpretation of what has occurred in the life of the person" (p. 48). With this paradigm based upon the work of Boisen and others such as the object relations theorists (Klein and Winnicott most particularly as well as Kohut and Kernberg and their work with the borderline person-

ality) Gerkin then makes a creative step toward understanding the work of counseling as being a process of hermeneutics. Here the author uses such hermeneutical luminaries as Gadamer and Ricoeur. In essence the counseling process is described first as a listening for the story of the counselee; second there is the fusion of the story of the counselee, the story of the counselor, and the story of the gospel (what Gadamer calls the fusion of the horizons of understanding); and third there is the reinterpretation of the counselee's past and present that will be more congruent and creative than the previous distortion that lead to counseling in the first place. The person of the counselor is very important, even more so than with most other forms of psychological counselors (either psychiatrists or psychologists and social workers). "Who one is as a pastoral counselor within the Christian tradition cannot be determined simply by introspective self-reflection. In Wilhelm Dilthey's language, our self-understanding as pastoral counselors requires a 'hermeneutical detour,' an excursion into reflection on those theological images and symbols that have given shape to Christian self-understanding historically" (p. 55).

Gerkin's theological method for understanding and elucidating pastoral counseling is not unlike Hiltner's in that it relies upon a dialogue between the Christian tradition and the empirical experience of living as informed by the human sciences. For this reason it is not hard to understand that Gerkin has great respect for Tillich's notion of correlation. He also uses Moltmann's notion of individual identity as relational identity and the work of the spirit. It is on the notion of relational identity that Gerkin comes clean on a most important issue (one I fear Patton fudges on) and that is the context of counseling as being firmly based in the work of the spirit in the church. Gerkin seems not to allow for a private practice among pastoral counselors. Here he manifests his ecclesiological integrity.

About two thirds of the book deals with theoretical issues. The remainder of the work deals with clinical technique, making operational the hermeneutical (both theological and psychological) notions put forward in the first part. Gerkin illustrates his points with many very clear and helpful case studies

and vignettes. His reporting of his work with "Warren" is most useful in its illustration of the usefulness of "demythologizing" ossified and possibly inaccurate notions of significant others in past relationships. Gerkin's use of Crossan's schema of the five ways of using language (*The Dark Interval*) is also useful and is suggestive of the work done by Capps (*Biblical Approaches to Pastoral Counseling*), particularly the notion of the tension between the myth and the parable, the latter being subversive of the former which can often be the seat of the distortion leading to crisis in the first place. The book ends with points that the author feels need further clarification such as the relationship between pastoral counseling and spiritual direction.

While I think that this is a fine and significant contribution to the field of pastoral theology I do think that there are some weak points. My major problem with Gerkin is his proclivity for open-ended counseling. By this I mean that Gerkin seems to be seduced by the psychoanalytic inclination toward open-ended counseling contracts. He justifies this with the explanation that unraveling and reconstructing the story can take time especially if the various defenses often confronted in counseling occur. He does in a couple of places wonder if his hermeneutical method could not be used in short-term counseling but seems to opt for the open-ended mode. Of course open-ended counseling is a rare "luxury" for most parish ministers who have little time for long-term counseling. Indeed my guess is that most parish ministers are more often than not confronted with requests for counseling that have a more strategic and short-term nature. There has certainly been a number of very fine works in recent years that seem to indicate that short-term, goal-directed counseling has much usefulness (works by psychiatrists such as Mann and Sifneos and psychologists such as Luborsky in time-limited therapy have wide appeal and applicability for the parish minister). I do not think that Gerkin's preference for psychoanalytic or dynamic therapy would be compromised by a short-term approach though it does appear that other therapeutic methods such as cognitive and behavioral therapy are time-limited by design.

A second criticism that I have is one that I must admit I have very little hard evidence to substantiate. Nevertheless I did have some

vague notion that Gerkin (and so many others who discuss counseling in terms of mutual passage making) understands that the counselor and the counselee are peers both on some kind of pilgrimage. While both the counselee and the counselor probably have more in common than they have that is dissimilar and share a common humanity, I believe that to forget that the pastor is addressed with a person's problems precisely because he or she also has sapiential and moral authority is to risk trivializing the counseling experience from the beginning. People do not go to pastors for counseling because "they are just like me" or because "the rev could learn something about her own self by counseling me." People go to pastors who they know are good at counseling and like to do counseling and have the training to do counseling. What the pastor learns about humanity including the pastor's own humanity is a secondary benefit and one that often happens but is nonetheless secondary.

These criticisms aside this is a very important book and should be "must" reading for any minister, parish or specialized in some other area, interested in and doing counseling. This is a book that unlike many dealing with pastoral counseling not only offers the reader some sound technical material but also details some constructive theology that not only buttresses the counseling but is in fact produced out of critical reflection upon the counseling experience.

BRIAN H. CHILDS

Princeton Theological Seminary
Trinity Counseling Service

Ulanov, Ann and Barry. *Cinderella and Her Sisters: The Envid and the Envyng*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1983. Pp. 192. \$9.95 (paper).

What does a fairy tale about such things as a fairy godmother, a glass slipper, and a young woman and her three stepsisters have to do with envy? Everything, if we realize that this story is the story of envy. Taking the fairy tale as a serious form of literature, we can discover that the Cinderella story has much to teach the adult world about envy. This book examines the often overlooked power of envy to injure, and even destroy,

the one who envies as well as the one who is envied.

The coauthors creatively approach envy by interpreting the Cinderella story psychologically and theologically, drawing heavily on Jungian psychology. In good Jungian fashion, they introduce envy in terms of opposites, the one who envies and the one who is envied. They then move to a discussion of the opposites in terms of an "envy complex" existing in each of us. This complex provides a lens through which to view women (and men), psychotherapy, and society.

Cinderella represents one side of the envy complex, the one envied, while the stepsisters represent the other side, the envious. The remaining characters represent different aspects of the Jungian psyche seen in relation to envy. The good fairy godmother and the bad stepmother represent the good and bad aspects of the primal Mother archetype. The prince represents the *animus*, which is the masculine or contrasexual component of the female psyche. Finally, there is "the good." This character, logically playing the self archetype in traditional Jungian terminology, is what the envied Cinderella possesses that the envious stepsisters want to steal.

As the story unfolds, Cinderella and her stepsisters reveal two different responses when they encounter each character. In psychological terms, the two types of response reveal the effects of envy on several aspects of the individuation process. For example, in chapter three we find that Cinderella can relate to the good mother, whereas the stepsisters cannot. The result is that Cinderella moves toward developing a strong feminine identity, while the stepsisters remain locked in a destructive relationship with the bad mother. This has important consequences for the encounter with the prince.

Of course, Cinderella also must relate to the bad mother and to the envious stepsisters, at whose hands she suffers. The crucial difference between her suffering and that of the stepsisters is that she refuses to deny or reject whatever bit of "the good" she possesses or has possessed. By this means she is enabled to acknowledge her suffering and bear it with dignity, to acknowledge her desire for what she does not yet have, and even to become a "good mother" for the stepsisters in the midst of her suffering. For reasons such as these the coauthors see in Cinderella a female Christ-figure, the suffering servant.

In the second section, envy is examined theologically. Envy is one of the traditional cardinal sins, second only to pride in deadliness. Envy as sin focuses on the absense of "the good" in ourselves, or our inability to see ourselves as creatures of the Creator. As enviers, we discover in our neighbors that which we lack, wanting either to steal that goodness or to destroy it. This view draws on the Augustinian tradition of sin as *privatio boni*.

The effects of envy as sin on the envier are discussed as the envier's "spiritual plight" and "sexual plight" in chapters eight and nine respectively. Its effects on the one envied are discussed as "the plight of the good" in chapter ten. The coauthors discuss the process required for overcoming envy in the next three chapters. This process is summarized in the following quote: "In *repentance*, we see that goodness had turned to us before we turned to it. Our turning is a response to a prior presence. In *consenting to the good*, we discover goodness has consented to us. In *corresponding to the graces given us* we come upon a goodness very different from our imaginings" (p. 149). The key to initiating this process is the initial presence of "the good." We find that as we experience this process we come to see envy as "a herald of the good" (p. 126). Envy, while remaining a negative thing, now assumes a positive role in the movement toward wholeness.

Appreciation of *Cinderella and Her Sisters*, will partly depend on one's appreciation of a Jungian perspective on feminine psychology, the critique of society, and theology. Important as these issues are, however, they should not blind us to the book's primary message about envy and its effects on human life. This message is very worthwhile and needs to be taken seriously. The coauthors succeed in communicating what the pervasive effects of envy are and what is needed to combat them. We should not close our

eyes to this unique perspective on human nature.

The book would be stronger if such concepts as "the good" had been clearly defined from the outset rather than used ambiguously. Also, further development of theological and biblical resources would have been helpful.

In the theological section, the coauthors unfortunately abandoned their original procedure. One expects a thorough theological interpretation of the Cinderella fairy tale, as in the psychological section. However, Cinderella is all but replaced with an array of examples from literature. This shift is regrettable because the coauthors miss an opportunity to further develop the Christological image of Cinderella as suffering servant. In the psychological section, the book emphasizes the "suffering" aspect of the image, while neglecting its "servant" aspect.

A thorough theological interpretation of the Cinderella fairy tale could have facilitated development of the "servant" aspect of the image, whose very core is mediation of "the good." Indeed, the crux of the matter is the need for an exploration into the nature of such mediation. Such exploration would seem to be vital since, as stated earlier, the initial presence of "the good" is the key to what is essentially a salvatory process beginning with repentance.

Cinderella and Her Sisters reminds us that envy is a destructive, powerful force in the world, and we must contend with it. This book is recommended not only because of the reflection it stimulates on this subject, but also for the coauthors' creative use of the fairy tale. In addition, it raises an intriguing possibility. Surely there is a need for fresh exploration of all the deadly sins.

GENE FOWLER

The Graduate School
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*The Reverend Donald Macleod
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